

# ALBERTA HISTORICAL REVIEW



SUMMER  
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RED RIVER CART BRIGADE, 1888  
(See Inside Cover)

- Overlanders in Alberta
- Survey Camp Life
- Visit to Blackfoot Camps



# Alberta Historical Review

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**Cover illustration:** Always fascinating to early travelers were the Red River carts used by the Metis for transportation and travel. These carts were made entirely of wood and could be heard for miles as they screeched loudly when travelling over the plains. Artist Frederic Remington sketched this Red River cart brigade during a visit to western Canada in 1888.

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### Editorial address:

Hugh A. Dempsey,  
Editor,  
95 Holmwood Ave. N.W.,  
Calgary.

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### Alberta Historical Review

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# The Overlanders in Alberta, 1862

by

THOMAS McMICKING

edited by Hugh A. Dempsey

Whenever gold was discovered in some remote part of the world, the news always had an electrifying effect. Whether the discovery was in California, Australia or the Klondike, thousands of men were ready to cast aside their normal lives and rush off in search of their eldorado.

When news of the Cariboo gold field discoveries was spread in 1861, many Ontario adventurers looked at their maps and decided that fortune was only a short distance away. Rather than risk the long boat trip around Cape Horn, the gold seekers decided to cross the prairies and Rockies by the most direct route. Men from St. Catherines, Ont., formed the nucleus of one party, while others were organized at Toronto, Huron and St. Peters. As they prepared to leave, they were joined by men from St. Thomas, Huntington, Ottawa, Montreal, Acton, Whitby, Waterloo, Scarborough, London, Goderich and Chatham. These men became known as the Overlanders of 1862.<sup>1</sup>

The St. Catherines party was led by Thomas McMicking who, at the end of his journey, wrote an account of his trip. We are fortunate to be able to reproduce the Alberta portion of this journey, taken from a copy in the Alberta Provincial Library.

The McMicking party left St. Catherines on April 23rd, 1862, and travelled by rail to Grand Haven, Michigan. From there they took the steamer "Detroit" to Milwaukee, the railway to Lacross, and the steamer "Frank Steele" to St. Paul, Minn. An overland journey then took them north to the Red River settlement—the jumping off place for their epic journey.

When they left Red River on June 2nd, the party consisted 132 men, one woman and three children; by the time they reached Fort Edmonton, they had added another fourteen men to their number.

The party passed Portage la Prairie on June 6th, Fort Ellice on June 14th and Carlton on July 1st. The latter part of their journey had been made extremely difficult by the desertion of their guide. From Carlton they pushed on to Fort Pitt, which was reached on July 9th. The account published in this issue begins at this point and ends at Yellowhead Pass. —the Editor.

Fort Pitt is a Hudson's Bay station, and is situated on the north side of the North Saskatchewan, nearly midway between the Carleton House and Edmonton. Between Fort Pitt and Edmonton there are two trails, one on each side of the river; but neither of them is very plain as the Hudson's Bay Company travel between these points chiefly with boats. We had not experienced much

difficulty in following the trail since we were deserted by our first guide; but the gentleman in charge of Fort Pitt advised us not to attempt the remainder of the road without a guide, and re-

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<sup>1</sup>An excellent account of the journeys of the various overland parties may be found in M. S. Wade's *The Overlanders of '62*, published as *Memoir 9* by the *British Columbia Archives*, Victoria, B.C., in 1931.



commended one Michelle, an Iroquois Indian<sup>2</sup>, to serve in that capacity. He also advised us to take the trail on the south side of the river, as it was better and shorter than that upon the north side. We found Michelle a faithful and intelligent guide, and were convinced of the wisdom of the course we had adopted before reaching Edmonton, as the trail was so indistinct that it would have been impossible to have found it without a guide.

We therefore re-crossed to the south side, our transit being safely accomplished in the same manner as our previous crossing, and camped on the bank where we remained until Thursday morning, when we resumed our journey. An exciting chase after a pair of fawns took place Thursday afternoon, and served to relieve the monotony of our march although no one was fortunate enough to capture the animals. On Friday morning Jno. Fannin shot a very large wolf, that had ventured too near to our camp. Hitherto the weather had been singularly favorable for our purpose; we had not been delayed a single day on account of rain, and altogether our journey had been tolerably comfortable; but now we were to have a change in the programme. At half-past 4 o'clock this afternoon it began raining heavily, and continued, with but little intermission, during the whole succeeding eleven days. We camped for the night at 5 o'clock, after being thoroughly wet, and remained there until Monday morning, the 14th, the rain pouring the whole time. At this time, the weather having cleared up for a little, we struck our tents and pushed forward, as we were desirous of making the best possible use of our time, but had not proceeded very far when we were compelled to halt again, as the rain was coming in torrents and wetting everything in our carts. And thus we plodded along, at one time driving on regardless of the rain, and at another time camping in a vain attempt to keep dry.

But a new difficulty now presented itself. The country through which we were passing was traversed and intersected by innumerable streams, tributaries of the Saskatchewan, and these had

become so much swollen by the extraordinary floods as to render fording impossible. The only way we could get over was by bridging, and to such an extent had the water risen that between the 18th and 21st we built *eight bridges*, averaging from forty to one hundred feet in length, besides wading without much ceremony through everything not more than four feet in depth. Upon one occasion, when the water from one of these streams was spread to a great distance over the adjoining plain, and after we had waded for at least half of a mile up to our waists, it became a question with some of the company whether it was really the Overland Route, that we were travelling; but all doubt upon the subject was at once removed by an assurance from Mr. Fannin that it was at least three feet overland where he had tried it.

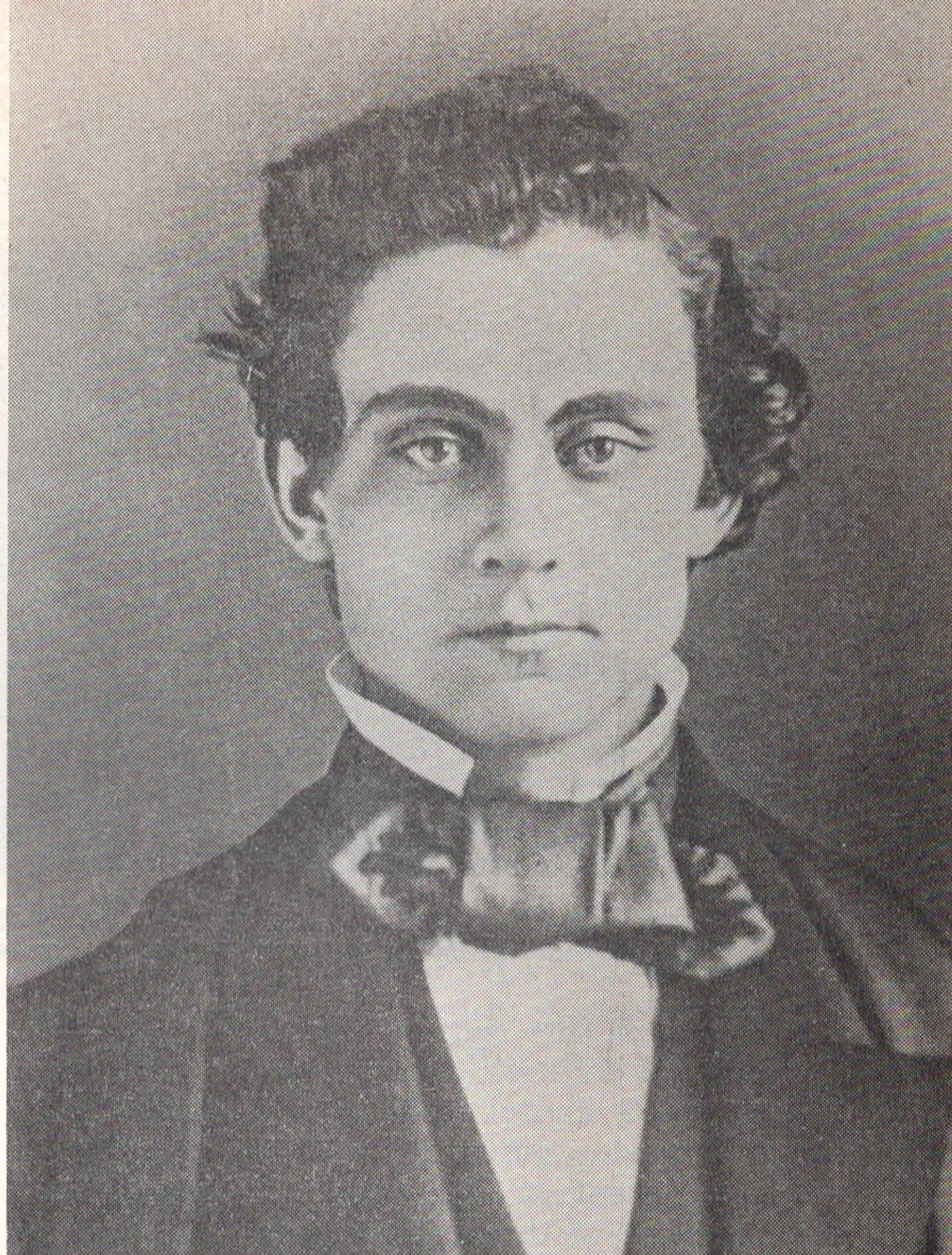
On Monday, the 21st day of July, 1862 at half-past 7 o'clock in the afternoon, we reached the crossing of the Saskatchewan at a point directly opposite to the Edmonton House, the sight of which was the signal for a hearty and tumultuous cheer, which was repeated again and again as the different parties came up, until the surrounding forests re-echoed with the sound. During the preceding eleven days our clothing had never been dry; we had just passed through what we considered a pretty tough time, and the toil-worn, jaded, forlorn and tattered appearance of the company was in striking and amusing contrast with our appearance a few months before; so marked, indeed, was the change that our most intimate friends at home would scarcely have recognized us. But our courage was still unbroken, and, although we had been much longer on the road than we anticipated, we had yet full confidence in our ability to reach the El Dorado of our hopes. All the boats at this point belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company had been car-

<sup>2</sup>Michel Callihoo was born in about 1825, the son of an Iroquois who had been brought west from the Caughnawauga Band near Montreal as a hunter and trapper for the fur traders. He signed an adhesion to Treaty No. Six in 1876 as chief of his band, and settled on the Michel Reserve north-west of Edmonton at Riviere Qui Barre. He died in 1910.



ried away by the unusual floods a few days before our arrival, so that we had no facilities for crossing, and we were compelled to remain in camp, on the opposite side of the river, until Thursday, the 25th of July, when those who had been sent down the river after the boats returned with them. We then crossed the Saskatchewan for the fourth time, in the same manner as we had previously done, all getting over safely.

We had often heard and read of the beauty and fertility of the great Saskatchewan valley; but after travelling through it for nearly a month we were satisfied that all description had failed to convey to the mind a full and accurate idea of its vast extent, the exuberance of its vegetation, the surpassing beauty of some of its parts, or its fitness and capacity for becoming the homes of a dense population; that, in short, the country must be seen to be appreciated. The Hudson's Bay Company cultivate a small portion of land at each of their stations; and from the ample returns they obtain for their labor, and the value set upon flour by the people about the forts, as evinced by the eagerness with which they bought that article from our company, paying any price we might set upon it, it was a matter of surprise to us that more attention was not paid to agriculture, and particularly to the cultivation of wheat. Sufficient, however, was grown to give us an idea of the productiveness of the soil. From Mr. Brazeau<sup>3</sup>, the gentleman in charge of the Edmonton House during the absence of Mr. Christie<sup>4</sup>, the master, we learned that from a field of ten acres they reaped four hundred bushels, or forty bushels to the acre, of prime wheat, equal to an average sample of Canadian wheat. What is more extraordinary, that wheat had been grown in the same field year after year in succession, for a period of about thirty years, and that, too, without the application of a particle of manure. The field was under the same crop again this year; it was just headed out when we were there, and promised a fair yield, although it was considerably injured by the drought that prevailed here in the early part of the season, as well as by the recent floods.



**Thomas R. McMicking, author of this paper, was leader of the Overlanders on their trek from Ontario to the Cariboo gold fields in British Columbia in 1862.**

We observed a field of barley, also, that had just headed out; it looked tolerably fair, having suffered somewhat from the same causes that effected the wheat. They consider about fifty bushels per acre an average yield. Potatoes, as well as other root-crops, grow most luxuriantly; the vines were in full blossom at the time of our visit. From a field containing about five or six acres they dug last year sixteen hundred bushels of potatoes. The rot is unknown.

We had an opportunity here of examining one of the natural resources of this region that will no doubt some day prove of incalculable value to the

<sup>3</sup>J. E. Brazeau was a Hudson's Bay Co. employee who was in charge of Rocky Mountain House, 1858-59 and Jasper House, 1861-62. Capt. John Palliser said he had been in the American fur trade for many years and was fluent in Stony, Sioux, Saulteaux, Cree, Blackfoot and Crow. "Being of an old Spanish family", said Palliser, "and educated in the United States, he also spoke English, French and Spanish fluently."

<sup>4</sup>William J. Christie was Chief Factor of Fort Edmonton.





**Fort Edmonton was the last point of civilization reached by the Overlanders before crossing the mountains. This sketch was made a year after their epic journey.**

whole of this region. I refer to the vast beds of coal which crop out in the banks of the Saskatchewan at Edmonton, and extend for several hundred miles in a north-western direction. It appears in the face of the bank in several parallel beds or layers, varying from two to six feet in thickness, and interstratified with a kind of red clay that has the appearance of having been burnt. It is very easily obtained, lying, as it does, upon the surface. Another of the probable resources of this country, and which may yet be a chief agent in attracting hither a large population, is gold. That the precious metal does exist in nearly all the streams flowing through the Hudson's Bay territory, east of the Rocky Mountains, is beyond all question, since we seldom failed to raise the color wherever we prospected; but that it may be found in paying quantities is yet somewhat problematical.

We were, however, assured by several parties living at Edmonton that large nuggets were frequently seen with the Indians, and that at low water the sand in the channel of the Saskatchewan literally glittered in the sun-light. A person whom we met at Portage la Prairie, who had acted for several years as interpreter to the Rev. Mr. Woolsey, Wesleyan missionary at Edmonton<sup>5</sup>, and upon whom we could place considerable reliance, even went so far as to offer, for a consideration, to take us to diggings within five days walk of the

Edmonton House, if he should return before we left the place, which he would guarantee to yield at least fifteen dollars a day to the hand, with rockers, and he would give us an opportunity to test their richness before he would expect his pay. Unfortunately he did not return to Edmonton before we left, so that we did not get an opportunity to take advantage of his offer as it was our intention to have done.

We had now reached the destination for which we set out from Fort Garry, and, in the mean time, the end of our journey. It remained for us now to determine by what route we should next proceed and what pass we should take across the mountains. In the solution of this question we had frequent interviews with Mr. Brazeau, of Edmonton, the Rev. Mr. Woolsey, who had seen several years in the country; Thomas Clover, Timoleon Love's companion<sup>6</sup>; Mr. Alexander, a clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company who had recently returned from the Jasper House; besides a number of freemen whose names I did not learn, many of whom were born and brought up in the neighborhood of the mountains. All parties with whom we conversed on the subject, both at this time and previously, agreed that the Boundary, Cootanie and Sinclair passes were the

<sup>5</sup>Rev. Thomas Woolsey was Methodist missionary for the Edmonton district from 1855 to 1864.

<sup>6</sup>Love and Clover were gold prospectors in the Edmonton area. Clover Bar, east of Edmonton, is named for the latter.



easiest and presented the fewest difficulties, but recommended the Leather, Cow-Dung Lake, or Jasper pass<sup>7</sup> for our purpose, as being the shortest and most direct way to Cariboo; altho' some of them represented the road as nearly impassible, and foresaw difficulties and dangers which they considered almost insurmountable. After thoroughly examining the matter, and carefully comparing notes, we decided to try the Leather pass.

Our next care was to secure another guide who could lead us safely over the mountains, to the head waters of the Fraser. This we found in the person of one Andre Cardinal<sup>8</sup>, a freeman of St. Albert, who was born at the Jasper House, where he spent the greater portion of his life. He had passed over the road between his birthplace and Edmonton twenty-nine times, and several times between Jasper and Tete Jaune Cache, at the head of the Fraser. For his services we paid fifty dollars in cash, an ox and cart, 1 cwt. of flour and a few groceries. We had been busily employed in the mean time exchanging our oxen and carts for horses and pack-saddles, and in disposing of such articles as we found too bulky for packing. As we were still at Edmonton on Sabbath, July 27th, we had the pleasure of listening to a sermon by the Rev. Mr. Woolsey at 11 o'clock in the fort, and at 4 o'clock in our own camp.

As none of us were accustomed to packing, our preparations here occupied a considerable time, so that we were not ready to leave till Tuesday morning July 29th, having remained at Edmonton a whole week. At 9 o'clock a.m. of this day we started again, our party being now reduced to 125, with about 140 animals, having purchased a number of additional horses here. Our animals were loaded with from 150 to 250 lbs. each. We reached the settlement of St. Albert, at Big Lake, 10 miles from Edmonton, at 1 o'clock, and remained there all night. Settlements were first made here about two or three years ago, and contain now about twenty families, consisting chiefly of freemen, persons who have fulfilled their term of service with the Hudson's Bay Company, and

received their discharges. It is a very fertile spot, beautifully situated on the eastern side of Big lake, which furnishes a plentiful supply of fish, and, what is an important desideratum in this, there is an abundance of timber suitable for building and other purposes in its immediate vicinity. Upon the farm and in the gardens attached to the Catholic Mission at St. Albert we observed a great variety of crops, including wheat, barley, oats, peas, buckwheat, Indian-corn, potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots, cabbages, onions, radishes, &c., all of which looked well and some of them promised a most abundant crop. Notwithstanding the great disadvantage at which we saw this part of the country, on account of the heavy rains and the consequent superabundance of water everywhere, we could not help admiring its general fertility.

Two short days' drive from this point brought us to St. Ann's Lake, on the shore of which we camped on Thursday night, having passed over an exceedingly rough road, built one bridge and endured a drizzling rain the greater part of the time. On Friday morning, August 1st, we drove about two miles to St. Ann's settlement, or village, where we again halted. Here we found a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, and a considerable settlement. It is 50 miles from Edmonton. A few years ago it is said to have contained some fifty families, but a part of them have lately removed to St. Albert, the settlement above described. Here we were fortunate enough to obtain some splendid new potatoes, which, with other vegetables, appear to grow almost spontaneously, and which, for size and quality, I have never seen excelled at this season in any country. The immense quantities and numberless varieties of berries produced here, including rasp, dew, straw and gooseberries, red and black currants, &c., are almost incredible, and the most careful cultivation at home has failed

<sup>7</sup>Yellowhead or Tete Jaune Cache.

<sup>8</sup>Andre Cardinal was an H.B.Co. employee in charge of Jasper House in 1855-56. In 1859, he accompanied the Earl of Southesk from St. Albert to Jasper House and in 1863 he provided Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle with information on the route to the Yellowhead Pass.



to produce anything that could equal the samples of black currants we saw growing wild. The lake of St. Ann's is a beautiful body of water, about 10 miles long and 4 miles wide, and abounds in whitefish.

On Saturday, the 2nd day of August, we left St. Ann's, having abandoned our last cart there. Our way for the remainder of our journey was totally different from what we had before passed through. Swamps and hills and streams alternated, and dense forests, where we were obliged to keep a gang of men ahead of the train to chop out the brush and fallen timber, were substituted for open prairies. We halted this day for dinner on the bank of Sturgeon River, and camped for the night by the Lake of Many Hills<sup>9</sup>, where we remained until Monday morning, the 4th of August. While we remained here, W. Sellars, of Huntingdon, who had waited at Edmonton for the arrival of Dr. Symonton's party, overtook us, bringing up letters from Fort Garry for some of our number, and a copy of the Toronto Globe of the 16th of May, which was the last intelligence we received from the outside world until we reached the end of our journey. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon of this day we camped on the bank of the Pembina River. The first object of interest that claimed our attention upon our arrival here was the coal, which again crops out in the banks of this stream, as at Edmonton. It appears here in a single stratum of perfectly pure coal, and where it is visible above water, about twelve feet in thickness. At our crossing place it formed the bed of the river; upon which we walked in fording, and had a considerable inclination toward the surface of the ground as you descend the stream. In the evening bright coal fires were blazing in every part of our camp, and those who were judges pronounced it a superior article.

Shortly after camping our notice was attracted by a heavy cloud of smoke which hung along the brow of a hill at a short distance to the left of the trail by which we came down. We immediately ascended the hill to ascertain whence the smoke proceeded, and upon reaching the summit we found, to our

astonishment, that it was issuing from the top of the hill; that we were actually standing upon a volcano<sup>10</sup>, and that beneath our feet still lay some of the smouldering embers of those mighty subterranean fires that at some remote period of time had caused those terrible convulsions in the crust of the earth that are so apparent throughout a great portion of this region. The crater appeared to be choked up by the loose soil on the surface continuously crumbling down into it, so that the smoke instead of escaping by a single aperture seemed to permeate the whole top of the mound. The earth on the surface is quite hot, destroying all signs of vegetation for some distance around, and when turned up with a spade we were unable to bear our hands upon it. There was a strong smell of escaping gas perceptible in its neighborhood.

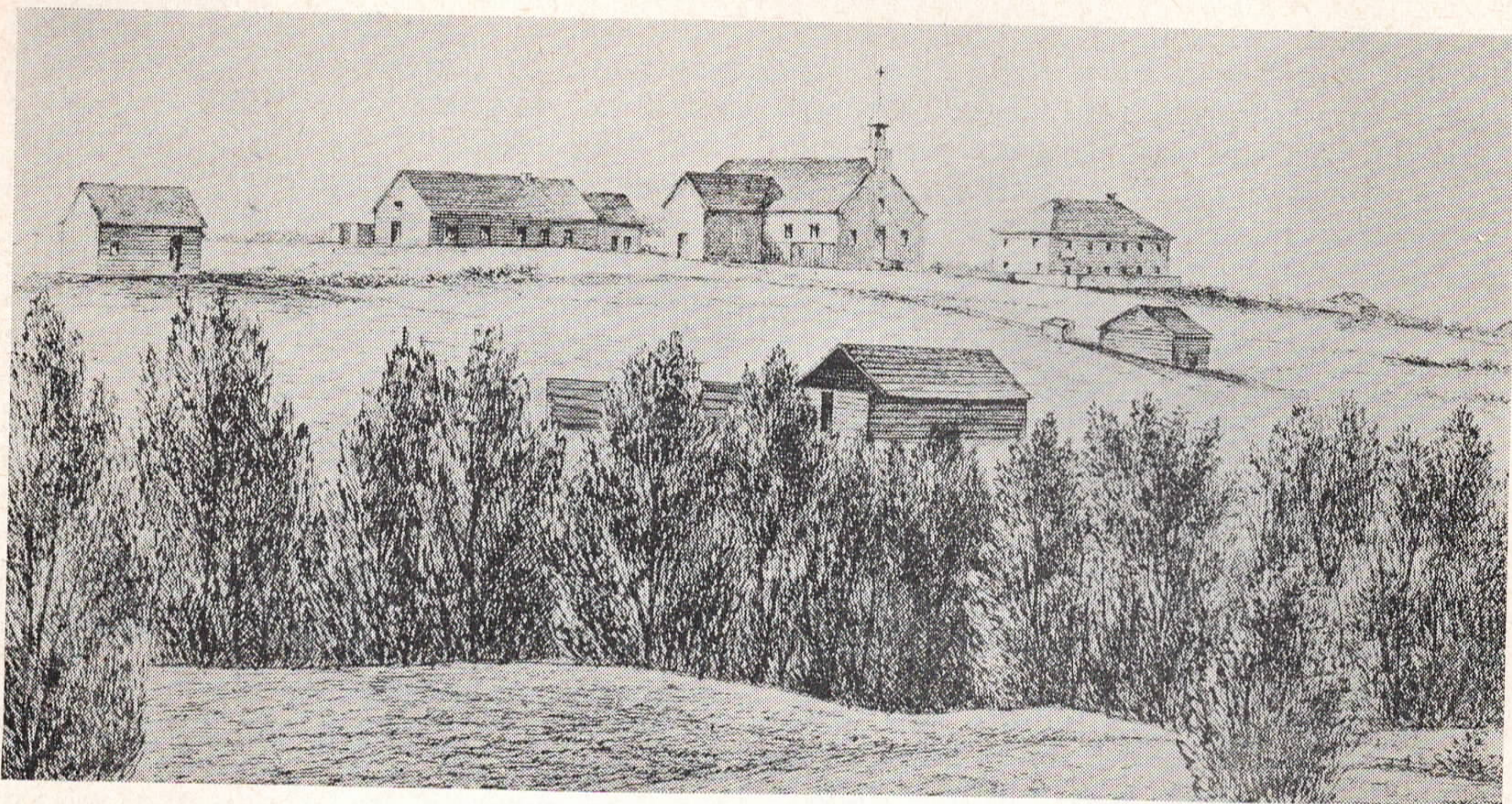
The weather on the morning of the 5th of August was very clear, and so cold that the dew, which fell very copiously, froze and hung in small icicles from the leaves. Our crossing here, which occupied the whole of Tuesday forenoon, was one of the busiest and most exciting scenes of our trip, and would have furnished a splendid subject for "our special artist". Part of our goods were carried over in boats made by spreading out our tents and placing our baggage in the centre, and then drawing up the edges with a lariat. Another line was then made fast to this, by which two men on horseback towed it across, while two others waded into the water, holding on to the float behind to keep it from upsetting. Another portion of them was carried on horseback, a man mounting the horse and taking the stuff up before him, where, as the water was just up to the horses' backs, he could have a chance to hold it up if it was likely to get wet. The balance that could not be injured by being wet, was carried over without unpacking. On the eastern

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<sup>9</sup>Lake Isle.

<sup>10</sup>A number of early travellers mentioned the underground coal fires in this region. When Dr. James Hector passed the site on March 4th, 1859, he commented, "A little above this point the coal has been on fire for many years." McMicking evidently mistook these fires for an active volcano.





The mission at St. Albert was just beginning when the Overlanders saw it in 1862. This sketch, made fifteen years later, shows a thriving mission in a permanent Metis community.

side of the river a number of men might be seen dispatching our goods by these different modes of conveyance, and as many more on the opposite side busily engaged in receiving and re-arranging them in packs, while the river was full of animals going and returning, loaded or empty. Here were a couple tugging away against the current with their canvas boat, while the luckless wights, up to their necks in the water, held on behind. There a bewildered equestrian was making a vain attempt to guide his steed across the stream, while his nervous friend, to whom he had given a deck passage, held him firmly in his arms, and put forth many well directed efforts to repay his generosity by ducking them both. And yonder, another bold navigator astride on an ox, sometimes in the water and sometimes out, was boxing the compass in his ineffectual endeavors to persuade his boon companion to shape his course toward sundown. All having got safely over we left the Pembina River after dinner and camped for the night on Buffalo-dung River<sup>11</sup>, a tributary of the Pembina. We forded this river soon after starting on the following morning, where the water was about three feet deep.

During the forenoon of Friday the 8th of August we passed over a portion

of the road that language is absolutely inadequate to describe. To say that it was horrible expresses but half the truth. It consisted of an interminable swamp, in which nearly the whole train would be mired at once, and over which we carried a considerable portion of our packs on our shoulders. We halted for dinner on Root River<sup>12</sup>, a branch of the McLeod, having passed at 11 o'clock the point from which, on a clear day, the first view of the Rocky Mountains can be obtained. The weather today was too hazy. On Saturday the 9th we made a long drive through a dense forest, consisting chiefly of spruce pine and poplar, in the middle of which we came upon a solitary grave. From a rude inscription upon the trunk of a tree hard by, we learned that it contained the last remains of one James Mokerty, who died while passing through these wilds in October, 1860. At half-past 4 o'clock this afternoon we reached the crossing of McLeod's River, when we forded it without removing our packs, and camped upon the west bank immediately after. McLeod's River is a considerable stream, about one hundred and fifty yards wide, and a branch of the Athabasca. We had

<sup>11</sup>Lobstick River, which flows from Chip Lake. This lake was originally known as Buffalo Chip or Buffalo Dung Lake.

<sup>12</sup>Carrot Creek.



some difficulty in fording this stream, as the current was very strong and the water exceedingly cold, and Messrs. [James] Willox and Gilbert narrowly escaped drowning by being swept off by the current into deep water. Here we remained till Monday morning the 11th. Our trail, which was an extremely rough one, lay for the following three days along the northern bank of McLeod's River, and during this time we forded a great many rapid streams.

On Wednesday, the 13th of August, precisely at 12 o'clock, noon, as the train emerged from a thick spruce swamp and halted for dinner upon a slight eminence, we obtained the first distinct view of the Rocky Mountains. Although we were yet about one hundred miles from them, their dark outline was plainly visible far above the level of the horizon, and their lofty snow-clad peaks, standing out in bold relief against the blue sky beyond, and glistening in the sunlight, gave them the appearance of fleecy clouds floating in the distance. The company were enraptured at the sight of them; for whatever dangers or difficulties might possibly be in store for us among them all were heartily tired of the endless succession of hills and streams and swamps, and swamps and streams and hills, and were willing to face almost any danger that would be likely to terminate or vary our toils.

On Thursday our guide had to hunt up an entirely new trail, as the unusual rush of water this year had in many places quite changed the position of the river, and completely washed away all traces of the old trail. After a long, weary drive on Friday, the 15th of August, we camped for the night on the bank of the Athabasca. This is a beautiful stream of clear, cold water, which takes its rise in the mountains, and is fed by springs and melting snow. Here we met some half-breeds who were on their way from the Jasper House to Edmonton, and from whom we purchased a piece of a mountain sheep which they had recently killed. We travelled for four days succeeding this time along the south bank of the Athabasca, a part of the time over a very good road. We camped on Saturday night, the 16th, on

Prairie River<sup>13</sup>, a tributary of the Athabasca, in full view of the mountains, where we remained until Monday morning. One day's drive from this point brought us to the mountains, at the foot of which we camped on Monday night. If it be true, as has been said, that "wherever there is vastness, there dwells sublimity," we were presented with a view at once sublimely grand and overpowering. On our left, and immediately overlooking our camping ground, a stupendous pile of rocks rose perpendicularly to the height of about one thousand feet; across the Athabasca, and directly opposite to this, Mount Lacombe<sup>14</sup> reared its rocky head to a still greater elevation, and behind us, Mount Mayette [Roche Miette], with its cold and craggy cliffs crowned with eternal snows, towered proudly far above the whole. Two of our company ascended the rock on the left of our camp, and when they reached the top they were scarcely discernible. They appeared like pigmies, and their loudest shout was scarcely audible to the rest of us at the bottom.

During the night of the 18th of August we were visited with a thunder storm, the effect of which was greatly heightened by our close proximity to the scene of the elementary conflict, and the recollection of which shall never be effaced from my memory. A heavy black cloud, that appeared to hang below the mountain tops, slowly floated across our zenith, completely shutting out the heavens and enveloping us in impenetrable darkness. Presently all the surrounding objects were highly illuminated for an instant, which the liquid fire coursed along the cloud, or darted from peak to peak, to be succeeded the next moment by a still deeper gloom, and followed immediately by deafening peals of thunder, which were re-echoed again and again from all sides of our amphitheatre, producing such a scene of terrific grandeur as I shall not attempt to describe.

On Tuesday the 19th of August we passed one of the most dangerous portions of our road. Our trail lay over a

<sup>13</sup>Maskuta Creek.

<sup>14</sup>Possibly Roche Ronde.





Jasper House was a mere dot on the bank of the Athabasca River (right side of river in a small clearing) as the Overlanders climbed a mountain trail. This sketch was made by the Milton and Cheadle party which took the same route in 1863.

pretty high mountain, and near the top consisted of a very narrow pathway, with a perpendicular wall of rocks on one side, and a steep declivity down to the edge of a precipice several hundred feet high on the other. Here a single blunder, one false step for either man or beast, and no human power could save him from instant destruction. The whole train passed it in safety. When we were on the top of this mountain we could see the Jasper House, a perfect picture of loneliness and solitude, away below us in the valley on the opposite, or north side of the Athabasca River, where from our elevation it appeared no larger than a hen-coop. This is another station of the Hudson's Bay Company, which some of their agents visit annually, at a certain season, for the purpose of trading with the Shuswaps and other Indians of the Rocky Mountains. It was shut up at this time. We halted for dinner this day on the shore of White-fish Lake<sup>15</sup>, being surrounded by Russian Jack, the Black Mountain and Smith's Peak<sup>16</sup>, and camped for night on a flat near the Athabasca after having climbed two or three very rugged mountains. At 8 o'clock in the morning of the 20th we reached the crossing place of the Athabasca river. We immediately set about building rafts, with which we floated ourselves and goods over, swimming our animals. We took dinner on the northern bank of the river after all

were safely over. The river here is about one hundred yards wide and fifteen to twenty feet deep, with a strong current. Here we found prospects which, according to the judgment of some Californian miners who accompanied us, would yield from three to four dollars a day. These were the most encouraging returns we met with, although it is quite possible we may have passed near by, or even over, rich diggings, since our prospecting was confined merely to washing a pan or two of sand, taken from the surface along the edges of the streams at whatever point our road might chance to cross them, without looking for any more promising localities. We entrusted the important duty of making a more thorough examination to those of our number who remained behind us.

At 8 o'clock on Thursday morning the 21st of August, we passed the ruins of Henry's House, a deserted trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company. It is situated on the north side of the Athabasca, near its confluence with the Mayette<sup>17</sup>. Shortly after this we reached the Mayette River, which we followed

<sup>15</sup>Talbot Lake.

<sup>16</sup>"Russian Jack" and "Smith's Peak" are probably McMicking's anglicizing of "Roche Jacques" and Roche de Smet. Black Mountain has not been identified.

<sup>17</sup>Near the present townsite of Jasper.



until we struck the head waters of the Fraser. Our progress along this stream was rather slow, both on account of the great quantity of fallen timber that obstructed our path, and the number of times we had to ford the stream. It is a mountain torrent that rushes down a rocky gorge, and our trail lay for a short distance on one side, and then on the other, so that in the short space of two hours we waded through it no less than seven times, while the water threatened to sweep us off our feet.

During the forenoon of the 22nd we crossed the Mayette twice, and camped for the night on the shore of Cow-dung Lake<sup>18</sup>. At 4 o'clock this afternoon we passed the heights of land or dividing ridge between the waters which flow to the east and those which flow to the west of the Rocky Mountains. We were somewhat surprised to find the weather in the valleys of this elevated region so mild and warm, surrounded as they were on every side with immense heaps of perpetual snow, while some of the vast glaciers extended far down toward them. There was a clearness, a lightness and salubrity about the atmosphere that was really delightful. Shortly after we passed the dividing ridge we struck the mighty Fraser at a point where we crossed it at a single step. During the first part of our journey we found such rich and abundant pasturage for our animals that some of our oxen were fit for beef by the time we reached Edmonton; but ever since we left the Saskatchewan the feed had been gradually failing, and for several days past there had been but very little for them to eat, so that they were rapidly giving out, and two or three were abandoned nearly every day, being unable to travel any further. When we started from Red River we expected to reach the end of our journey in about two months, and provided ourselves with what we considered a plentiful supply of provisions—168 lbs. of flour and 50 lbs. of pemican, besides a variety of other articles to each man. But we had been nearly three months already on the way, and were yet in the middle of the mountains without any certain knowledge of what was before us, and our stock of provisions

was running so low that, as a precautionary measure, we had been for some time upon short allowance. Here we ate our last pemican, when we found it necessary to kill an ox. Our supply of salt was nearly exhausted, and we had to cure our meat by cutting it into thin strips and drying it over the fire.

On Saturday the 23rd of August our guide intended to camp for the night on Moose Lake, but owing to the desperate condition of the roads we were unable to reach it; we camped upon the Fraser within about four miles of it, where the feed was very scarce. We were compelled to move from this spot on Sabbath, the 24th, in order to obtain pasturage for our animals, and camped again at the western end of Moose Lake. Feed still very indifferent. We dined this day upon a dish so delicate and rare that it might have tempted the palate of Epicurus himself. It was roasted skunk, which our guide prepared and served up to us in true Indian style. After we had finished our repast, which all appeared to relish, we wondered that we had not discovered its good qualities sooner.

Our trail this day followed along the shore of Moose Lake, which is nine miles long. The weather still remarkably fine. On Monday the 25th we drove for two hours and fifteen minutes when we came upon a beautiful valley, bearing the most luxuriant crop of grass we had seen for many a day, where we halted to feed our hungry animals, and took dinner, treating ourselves today to a piece of porcupine, which also esteemed a great delicacy. During the day we found vast quantities of huckleberries of extraordinary size. We camped this night in the woods on the side of a mountain, where there was not a mouthful of feed for our animals excepting what they browsed from the trees. The long drives we were compelled to make over such a road without sufficient feed now told fearfully upon the poor beasts, which were failing rapidly, and it was fortunate that we were nearly over, as it was evident they could not endure such treatment much longer. We noticed

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<sup>18</sup>Yellowhead Lake.



a considerable change in the character of the timber since we began to descend the mountains; for while that upon the eastern slope consisted exclusively of spruce, pine, poplar and small willows, upon the western side we met cedar, hemlock, balsam and soft maples, in addition. The Fraser had now become a large stream, and was continually receiving fresh additions from numberless tributaries, which we met at every little interval rushing down the declivities of the mountains with fearful impetuosity. About mid-day on the 26th we passed a dangerous spot, very much like that opposite to the Jasper House on the Athabasca. We did not venture our horses across it loaded, but unpacked them and carried our provisions over on our shoulders. During the afternoon we

crossed a great many streams of intensely cold water, and camped for night in a kind of amphitheatre surrounded on all sides with lofty snowcapped peaks. We were early roused from our slumbers on Wednesday morning by our guide shouting through the camp, "Hurrah for Tete Jeune Cache!" and were informed that we should reach the Cache, if no misfortune befell us, some time during the day; an announcement that was received by the company with unaffected enthusiasm.

Accordingly, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of this day, we were delighted with a view of the welcome and long-looked-for spot. We had now completed the second stage of our journey; and it only remained for us to undertake the third and last.

Editor's note:

When they reached Fraser River at the Yellowhead Pass, the Overlanders split; one group favored the idea of floating down the river in rafts and canoes, while a smaller group decided to strike south for the Thompson River.

Some members of the first party bought canoes from the Shuswap Indians while others built rafts. Although they knew nothing about the river, the first adventurers set out on Sept. 1st, followed by others as their crafts were ready. By Sept. 11th most of them had reached the mouth of the Quesnelle River and were soon at the gold diggings. However, along the turbulent Fraser River were the bodies of four men who had perished. A. C. Robertson, J. Carpenter and P. Leader were drowned when their canoes overturned in rapids, while Eustace Pattison was rescued from the river but died of exposure.

The second party, consisting of about twenty people, had a nightmarish two-week overland journey to the Thompson. When they reached the river, they built rafts and floated part way down until they reached impassable rapids. They were obliged to abandon their rafts, but built new ones below the rapids and reached Fort Kamloops on Oct. 11th. From there they made their way to the gold fields. Two of this group died; William Strachan was drowned in the rapids while Frank Penwarden drowned below Fort Kamloops.

There is no indication that any of the Overlanders ever discovered a fortune in the Cariboo gold fields.

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### Burning Coal

"A coal mine on Elk [Red Deer] river, which runs into the South Saskatchewan, has been on fire for over 100 years, and no Indians could ever be induced to go near it, owing to some superstitious notion they have respecting it. Coal of a good bright kind exists on both sides of the river; it burns well and is easily obtained along the banks; it is from one to three feet in thickness."

—Manitoba Free Press, July 14, 1876.



# Life in a Survey Camp

by

F. S. DYKE

Lower Egypt seemed to be a long ways away one cold March morning in 1910 as I stood before a rather grim greystone building in Calgary, the site of which is now occupied by the Palliser Hotel. Having just acquired three years of experience in the Nile delta, I had seen a brief item in the Egyptian Gazette regarding the C.P.R.'s project to irrigate some 3,000,000 acres of its lands in southern Alberta. I had decided, with the brashness of youth, that my services would undoubtedly be invaluable to the company, and had advised the chief engineer of its Irrigation Department to that effect. His reply, though non-committal, had failed to dampen my conviction, and I had left the land of the Pharaohs to present my qualifications in person to A. Scott Dawson, the Chief Engineer in Calgary. Although my reception was rather less enthusiastic than I had anticipated, he proved prepared to offer me a job as chief of a plane table party on the preliminary survey work. I still wonder if he realized what a long chance he was taking on an over-confident young man entirely ignorant of Canadian life and manners.

All field parties were to pull out from Brooks, the headquarters of the Eastern Section of the C.P.R. Irrigation Block, about 80 miles east of Calgary. This town consisted of a street of unpainted frame buildings resembling overgrown packing cases, and a single huge horse tent in which we were served our first meal on the evening of our arrival. This tent and many of the buildings were entirely flattened during the course of that memorable meal by a sudden and terrific windstorm causing a quick exit by every man through rents in the canvas, each clutching the uneaten portion of his rations. Large sections of that tent subsequently appeared as carpets and bedspreads in the teamsters' tents.

The personnel of my own party consisted of fifteen "boys", ranging in age from seventeen to seventy, providing a variety of types quite new to my previous experience, and the inevitable Chinese cook. The latter was always addressed as "John" and to a tenderfoot in the wild and wooly west it was a little surprising that the "Heathen Chinees", whatever his occupation, ap-

peared to have acquired such a traditionally Christian name. Really, though it was no more surprising than the usual form of hailing any occidental stranger as "Hey, Mack!".

Our first campsite, some twenty miles away, was near a small waterhole in a shallow coulee, misnamed One Tree Creek. Once established in the field, a growing undercurrent of unrest amongst "the boys" soon brought home to me the fact that the cook was, or could be, the most important member affecting the general morale of the party. In the first few weeks several "Johns" followed each other in a dismal succession of failures, until the final incumbent for the cook tent arrived by the weekly tote team from headquarters.

The arrival of our ultimate "John" was impressive. His name according to the payroll appeared to be Ching Sing but I doubt if anyone but the paymaster and I ever knew it. Seated high on the summit of supplies in the wagon, he had the appearance of an elderly Buddha, a large green umbrella held aloft in one hand, a cheap alarm clock firmly

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*Mr. Dyke, now a resident of Vancouver, was involved in Alberta's irrigation development for a number of years. After the experiences related in this article he served in World War One and then continued his career as a division engineer for the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District.*



grasped in the other. Also, though this was to be revealed later, his dunnage included a decidedly plebian tabby cat with five kittens.

John was an immediate success with "the boys" and returned to the field with me for three successive seasons. He soon made himself at home in the cook tent and shortly after released his feline family from an old apple crate and was busily engaged in hand feeding the kittens. Firmly grasping each one by the scruff of the neck, he gazed intently into its face and injected some unidentified liquid into its mouth with a medicine dropper.

On the following morning before breakfast he greeted us with the smiling query "You likum hot cat?" Curiosity overcoming a vague misgiving, we guardedly admitted a penchant for "hot cats", and awaited the promised delicacy with some uneasiness. However John soon bustled in with nothing more alarming than a pile of smoking hot buckwheat cakes, and our doubts were quickly dispelled.

He soon proved to be an excellent camp cook, but a confirmed addict to "do-it-yourself" carpentry. Lumber, always a scarce commodity in camp, was doled out by headquarters only for such indispensable articles as mess tables and benches or survey stakes. Its frequent disappearance often seemed to coincide with the advent of a higher standard of living in the teamsters' tents as indicated by a sudden increase in home made furniture. But John was by far the worst offender and, obsessed by some ostrich type of complex, he appeared to think that a fourteen foot plank under one arm was invisible as long as his open umbrella was held in the other. This idea was quickly dispelled, but as he was usually alone in camp most of the day, there were many opportunities when such camouflage was unnecessary.

Riding back to camp one evening soon after the beginning of his regime, I was startled by the unusual appearance of the mess tent. Strange protuberances in the canvas roof suggestive of an emaciated cow's hip bones were the



**"Seated high on the summit of supplies in the wagon, he had the appearance of an elderly Buddha, a large green umbrella held aloft in one hand, a cheap alarm clock firmly grasped in the other."**

salient features. On raising the flap I was confronted by a massive Elizabethan type four-poster bedstead occupying most of the rear end of the tent; it had been erected by the indefatigable John during our absence in the field. It became my painful duty to explain to him that Tudor bedsteads were no longer fashionable in survey camps.

In the lunch boxes which John prepared for the three four-man plane table parties, a pie of sorts was usually the *piece de resistance*. The contents of these pies were often a surprise and occasionally consisted of jack rabbits which, besides being fairly numerous in those days, had the additional advantage of proving an easy mark for a well aimed rock.

Although possessing a nodding acquaintance with the English alphabet, John's spelling was decidedly shaky. While busy in my tent one evening, he



appeared with the query, "How you spellum labbit?" Absent-mindedly, but quite truthfully replying "l-a-b-b-i-t", I forgot the incident until next day at lunch time, when the box I happened to be sharing disclosed a nicely browned pie with the inscription "LABBIT" painstakingly pricked in the crust with a fork. After that John got into the habit of labelling all his pies, sometimes with no reference to their contents, but with expressions obviously picked up from "the boys". "GODDAM" in large block capitals was one of the most favoured and less startling of such mottoes, but even at their worst I preferred to think that John intended his embellishments merely as appropriate greetings to those present.

During the following season, John was again with our company when, to his gratification, permanent quarters were assigned to the party. It was a new ditchrider's shack which had been erected for permanent use in the operation of the irrigation project after construction had been completed. This shack was a standard type frame building containing six small rooms surrounding a central brick chimney, so with "the boys" in tents outside, John was promoted to a real kitchen of his own with an adjoining messroom. True, the kitchen as such was only indicated by the single inlet in the brick chimney, but it also had the only back door, a desirable feature for the convenient discharge of dishwater, and John soon had it and the messroom furnished with strictly functional and mostly superfluous items.

Being now in permanent quarters for the construction period, a grudging assent was obtained for the purchase of a camp cow. Though frequently surrounded in the daytime by curious herds of wild-eyed range steers with alarmingly long horns, my previous experience with the bovine species was slight, and I enlisted the services of a canny Scot instrument man in our search for a suitable animal, though it soon became evident that we were both profoundly ignorant of the points of a good milk cow.

Our objective was the only human habitation visible on our horizon, a tiny

homesteader's shack perched on the summit of a small knoll several miles away, whose owner was suspected of harbouring a cow. His establishment proved to consist of a very small one room log cabin and a very large barn, with an extensive corral adjoining. The homesteader himself we found in the barn, a weather beaten type arrayed in dingy leather chaps, a checked shirt, and unbelievably, a bowler hat. The mystery of this incongruous headgear was never explained but when informed of our mission, its wearer was valuable in his praises of an available prospect.

"Right out there now in the corral; she's a regular pet, eat out of your hand—just the critter you want!"

Slightly sceptical, we inspected this paragon from a safe distance—a thin, wiry, range cow, with a shifty look and horns of uncomfortable length.

From a ringside seat on top of the corral fence we watched with interest as our man closed the gate behind him, and with one hand outstretched, the other holding a halter concealed behind his back, cautiously approached the "pet" with conciliatory noises. The latter held her ground with lowered head until her opponent was within a foot and then suddenly erupted into violent action. There followed some very clever footwork on both sides, our man showing a slight edge in speed, but loosing his bowler hat in the early stages. At the end of the first round we incautiously entered the ring with the intention of rescuing the hat from further ignominy and were caught unawares when the second round started without previous warning. There followed a series of mad rushes by the "pet" but we were busy getting out of harm's way and so missed the best parts of this action; but from the appearance of our man at the end of this round we unanimously awarded it to the "pet".

The final round opened quietly with both parties on the defensive, the "pet" giving ground before a cautious approach by our man until backed into her own corner. Attempting a decision, the farmer made a sudden grab for the



"pet's" horns with the apparent intention of trying to "bull-dog" his opponent to her knees. A prolonged clinch followed, ending only when the "pet" broke loose, leaving our man seated in the mud of the corral, and took a flying leap over the surrounding fence and disappeared across the prairie, her tail erect in triumph. The fence was at least five feet high and I still find it hard to believe the evidence of my own eyes, but that was undoubtedly the grand finale of the whole bout, and we unhesitatingly named "pet" the winner.

Strangely enough I cannot now remember how the "pet" was eventually persuaded to join our menage, but join it she did, and formed a close attachment to John, who was appointed cowherd and milkmaid by acclamation. In the latter capacity he regarded the cow as a sort of milk reservoir, to be tapped as occasion demanded, and he could be seen at almost any hour strolling out to the pasture with green umbrella in one hand, an enamel jug in the other to extract the required amount. The cow seemed to make no objection to such casual treatment.

Shortly before starting out into the field in the early spring of our third season, I had taken a wife who, by gracious permission of the C.P.R., was permitted to join the party. John's reaction to the introduction of a female element into a hitherto strictly male community seemed to suggest a general

disapproval, but I subsequently gathered that his feelings had been hurt by my failure to give him adequate notice of my marital intentions. He relented sufficiently however, to produce a very stodgy wedding cake for the evening meal, surmounted by an even stodgier bird of some unknown but evidently Chinese species.

Later he presided with interest at the unpacking of some of the late arriving wedding presents which we had had to bring with us, and his explanations of the functions of each item were most enlightening. A large brass jardiniere was at once designated as "niddy for soup", while the use of a small brass letter rack was described as "niddy for toast". A set of dessert spoons was hailed as "jellup spoons" though the precise signification of the term escaped us. A chafing dish brought the comment "niddy for loose meef", a more intelligible description, as the phrase had long been John's generic name for any kind of roast meat.

Thanks to my wife's tactfulness she and John soon became fast friends. Mel-  
lowed by the feminine influence, the mottoes on the pies improved in context and spelling, and she was presently accorded John's kind permission to try her hand at baking pies herself in the off hours, though he regarded the results

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**The "boys" of the author's plane table survey party are seen here having lunch in the shade of their wagon in 1910.**





with rather a pitying smile and the cryptic remark "boys eat um".

Harmonious relations between camp and kitchen developed and continued until one fateful August day. Though as usual on the prairies, the nights were always cool, a hot wind had sprung up that morning and by early afternoon it was raising whirling pillars of alkali dust from the dry sloughs and sweeping across the scorched prairie grass. Alone in his kitchen sat John, clad only in a sleeveless vest, with pigtail neatly curled on the crown of his head, perspiring profusely from the heat and the mental exertion of writing home. On his rare attempts at literary composition, John was always inclined to be a trifle short-tempered and considering the mysteries of the Chinese ideographs he so carefully formed with a fine camel hair brush, I always respected his preoccupation on such occasions and left him alone until his correspondence was completed.

On that ill-omened day two of "the boys" who detached from their party early on some mission, had missed their lunch, and returned to camp in the afternoon with insistent demands for immediate nourishment, just as John, limp from the heat and exhausted by his literary labours, had finished his letter.

I was never able to assess the exact amount of provocation on either side, but it was evidently considerable. Hard words followed, climaxed by John seizing

a meat axe and, with pigtail flying, pursuing the now thoroughly scared "boys" across the baking prairie. On my return to camp that evening I received a highly coloured account of the affair from the latter, and subsequently a deputation from the whole party demanded the instant dismissal of the culprit. My own sympathies were entirely with John, but I could hardly expect headquarters to take the same view if confronted with the wholesale resignation of all the party save the cook in the middle of the season's work.

All attempts at appeasement failing, I spent a harrowing half hour explaining the consequences of his berserk behaviour to a now thoroughly subdued and contrite John.

It was a painful interview for both of us and as the tote team which would remove the transgressor was not due for three days, the period of waiting proved most trying. John, though carrying on with his regular duties, apparently refrained from all food himself, and while not busy with his normal routine sat disconsolate on his homemade bunk, sadly murmuring "I no can stay".

We never saw him again and his successors for the remainder of the season proved a just retribution to "the boys" for their ill-considered ultimatum. But my wife and I will always remember John with sincere regard and affection.

#### **Notice to Cowboys (Advertisement)**

"Now that the cattle round up north of the Bow is about to start and that it is the general practice of the men, year after year, when they come into this valley, to sweep everything clean before them and run them for all they're worth, either to the Messrs. Perrenond's corrals or to the lakes north of Cochrane, a distance of seven miles.

"Now I wish it to be distinctly understood that any party or parties whatever, who remove any of my stock, either cattle or horses, from this valley, or are known to do so, will be arrested and tried in the Supreme Court. It is scandalous the abuse and ill treatment the dumb brutes have to stand every year at this time.

"Stockmen that are obliged to hire help at this particular time would be their own friends if they would avoid these ten and fifteen dollar men, who cannot read a brand when they see one; also men who go to the round up for the fun of abusing stock."

"E. D. Mackay, Burnside, Cochrane, N.W.T.  
—Calgary Herald, June 9, 1898.



of the "Three Buttes"<sup>1</sup>. The atmosphere is so smoky or hazy that we had been unable to discover this lofty Land Mark—visible in clear weather at a distance of more than 100 miles—until within 20 miles of its summit.

*Monday, Sept. 3rd.* Just as we were starting, the Little Dog<sup>2</sup> and a Piegan warrior came to camp, bringing a note from Gov. Stevens, saying that he had furnished him with a horse and sent him as a guide. The Little Dog could discover no traces of the stolen Flat Head horses<sup>3</sup>, and thinks they have been taken to the North Camps.

We pursued our course due north, over a broken country, and in 15 miles crossed the Dividing Ridge between Maria's and Milk Rivers, and struck upon the head of a Ravine or Coulee, as they are called in this country, having perpendicular walls 150 feet high of white and red sandstone. Following down this coulee we found a small stream flowing to Milk River, and considerable Cottonwood of the narrow-leaved species. There were traces of old encampments and the Little Dog said the Blood Indians were encamped here last winter.

In 5 miles more we struck Milk River (Indian name *Ke-nock-sis-sah-ti*) at a place called "the Writings"<sup>4</sup>, which I had often heard spoken of by the Indians as a locality where white men had many years ago written upon the rocks, and I determined to avail myself of this opportunity to examine into the matter carefully. "The Writings", whatever they once were, are now nothing more than a range of Sandstone rocks 30 to 60 feet in height, parallel to the river and distant  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile. They are worn by the action of the weather into a thousand fantastic shapes, presenting in places a smooth perpendicular surface carved with rude hieroglyphics and representations of men, horses, guns, bows, shields, etc. in the usual Indian style. No doubt this has been done by wandering war parties, who have here recounted their "coups" in feats of war, and horse stealing, and inscribed them upon these rocks, in the same manner as they are often seen painted on their "Medicine Robes", and the lining of

lodges. Were there ever upon these rocks writings done by the hands of white men, time has long since obliterated them. Passing up the river one mile we encamped, having made today only 20 miles, but our Guide says there is no wood or water for a long day's march beyond.

*Tuesday, Sept. 4th.* Passed from the river valley to a high, level plain of different character from that on the South of Milk River. The soil is a sandy loam; the grass although very short, forms a heavy turf & the Prickly Pear has disappeared. Pursuing our course due N., true, in 20 miles came to a Lake 6 miles long by two broad. Its shores are gravelly and water clear, but I named it "Stinking Lake" because at the distance of a mile we perceived from it an offensive odor of Carburetted Hydrogen Gas. The Indians call this *Pah-kah-kee*, or Unlucky Water, from having lost a number of horses when encamped here some years since, and they thought the water killed them.<sup>5</sup> Our Indians and the horses, however, drank of it and experienced no bad effects. Here we saw the first Buffalo, and during the afternoon were passing through large bands.

We rode rapidly hoping to make Belly river<sup>6</sup> where the Lodges are supposed to be, but at 7 P.M., having travelled 55 miles, we halted at a small pool of rain water.

*Wednesday, Sept. 5th.* Night and morning cloudy and cold. Pushing on, at 12 miles we struck *Mo-ko-un* or Belly river,

<sup>1</sup>Sweetgrass Hills, just south of the International Boundary and east of Coumts.

<sup>2</sup>Little Dog was a Peigan chief and leader of the Black Patched Moccasins band. After *Lame Bull's* death he was recognized as head chief of the tribe but was murdered by his own people in 1866.

<sup>3</sup>This refers to a number of horses which were stolen from the Flathead Indians while they were visiting Governor Stevens. The governor had promised the Indians they would be returned.

<sup>4</sup>This is the earliest known reference to Writing-on-Stone. The site, about 20 miles east of Milk River town, is preserved as a provincial park.

<sup>5</sup>This is Crow Indian Lake, 10 miles south of Skiff. The word "*Pakowki*" means Bad Water and is now applied to a larger lake south of Medicine Hat.

<sup>6</sup>The river below the confluence of the Belly and Oldman had been called the Belly until surveyors found that the Oldman was actually the larger stream. Since then, the river downstream has been called the Oldman.



# A Visit to the Blackfoot Camp

by

JAMES DOTY

edited by Hugh A. Dempsey

Editor's Note: In 1855, the American government arranged to sign a treaty with the Blackfoot and other tribes on the Upper Missouri River. Isaac I. Stevens, who was in charge of the negotiations, wanted to have as many chiefs of the tribes present as possible. Accordingly, he sent his assistant, James Doty, on an expedition into southern Alberta to contact any bands of Indians which normally hunted or traded on American territory. He was instructed to contact all "American" Indians (as opposed to the more northern "British" Indians) to inform them of the treaty conference.

The treaty, which was signed on October 17th, 1855, attempted to establish peaceful relations among the warring tribes and with the American government. It also gave the tribes \$20,000 annually in gifts for ten years and \$15,000 annually for the introduction of agriculture and education.

The report of Doty's journey reproduced here is from a manuscript copy in the U.S. National Archives. In places his exact route is difficult to trace, but he was the first man to report visiting Writing-on-Stone and his most northerly penetration was within the present Blackfoot Indian Reserve, east of Calgary.

In compliance with your instructions of August 31st directing me to "go north to confer with the Tribes and Bands of the Blackfoot Nation, and make the necessary arrangements to secure their presence at the approaching Council", I left this point [Fort Benton] in the evening of that day, and have the honour to submit the following report of my operations.

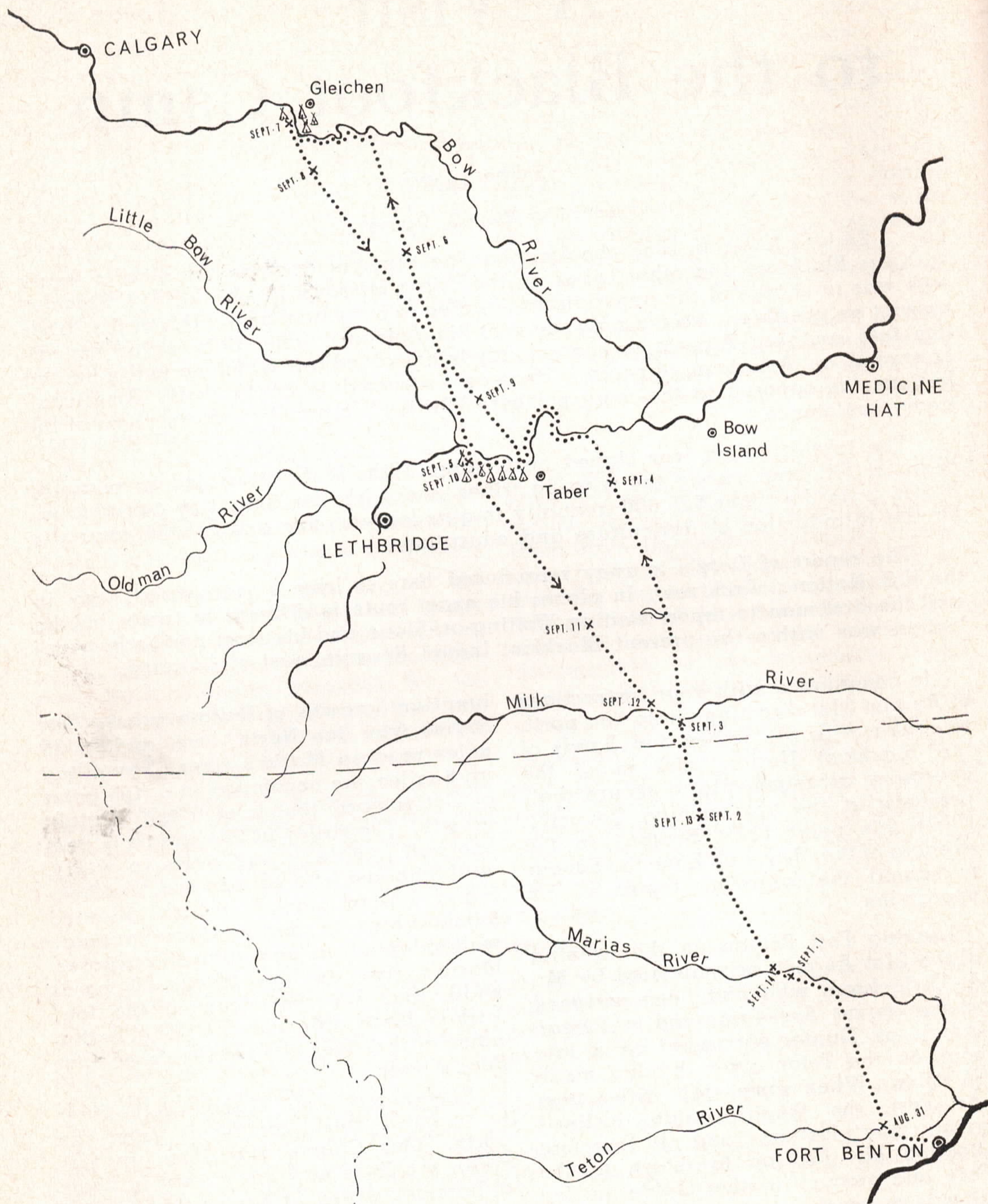
Leaving Fort Benton on the evening of the 31st August, accompanied by Mr. A. C. Jackson, who had been assigned to me as an Assistant, and a Piegan Indian as Guide, encamped at a late hour on the Teton river, having made 14 miles. When some eight miles from the Fort, the Piegan guide declined going any further, and I therefore directed Mr. Jackson to return to the Fort, and procure another Guide; in this he was successful, and reached my camp at 11 p.m.

*Saturday, Sept. 1st.* We leave the Teton at the point and pass over a high plain, destitute of wood but covered with a

luxuriant growth of Buffalo grass. Our course was due North, true, and in 35 miles reached Maria's river. Travelling up 8 miles, we encamped in a fine point of Cottonwood timber of a tall straight growth. The valley of this stream is from one half a mile to two miles in width, well timbered with cottonwood, and having a soil of reddish or ash coloured loam, which in many places appears well adapted to agricultural purposes. Maria's river is here about 70 yards wide, and 2½ feet deep at the ford with a three mile current. The Indian name of the river is *Kay-i-you-sis-sah-ti*, or Bear's river.

*Sunday, Sept. 2nd.* Passed up the river to a small creek coming in from the north. Our Course was then up this creek, which is now dry except in pools of brackish water. It has no timber after one mile above its mouth. In 50 miles reached the source of this Creek, and encamped in a fine grove of Cottonwood, Box Alder and Willow, in which are several springs of excellent water. Our camp is at the base of the most westerly





The approximate route taken by Doty's party in 1855 is indicated on this map. Modern points such as cities, towns and the boundary line are shown to make the route easier to follow. The crosses show campsites and tipis are the Indian camps. The scale is approximately 35 miles to the inch.



about 15 miles above its junction with Bow river. The stream is here 150 yards wide, and is deep with a current of 4 miles per hour. Water clear and cold. The shores are gravelly & sloping. The River is subject to an ordinary rise of 10 feet, and to extraordinary freshets of 40 feet as shown by the pine drift-wood scattered over the valley. There is no timber on the river for some distance above and below this point.

Having breakfasted, we were again moving. Our Indians declared, from traces they could discover, that the Camps were up the River and accordingly we pushed rapidly in that direction. In eight miles crossed the River at a shallow ford and in 15 miles more came in sight of Indians on the opposite side moving up. Crossed and learned that it was the South Piegan camp, under the lead of the *Lame Bull*<sup>7</sup> who was encamped some distance above. Learned also that Mr. Bird<sup>8</sup>, whom I relied upon as an Interpreter, was with the *Lame Bull*, and that the Flathead horses, recently stolen, had this day been brought to this camp. I did not stop at the first lodges, but pushed on to have an interview with the head chief. In some ten miles came in sight of the upper camp. The *Lame Bull* and Mr. James Bird came out to meet me, and the Chief invited us to his Lodge.

In accordance with your instructions I immediately secured the services of Mr. Bird as Interpreter. The principal chiefs were at once assembled and I stated to them that the Commissioners to hold the Blackfoot Council had sent me to confer with all the Blackfoot and invite them to be present at the Council. I would give them full information concerning the council, but there was another matter to be spoken of first. It was this. Two of their young men had stolen four horses from some Flat Heads who were coming to make a treaty of peace with the Blackfoot, and who were on a visit to the Commissioners at Fort Benton at the time the horses were stolen. These were stolen from the Soldier Chief's band of horses, where they had been placed by his direction, & he regarded them as his own.

The Commissioners, or Soldier Chiefs, did not think the Blackfoot Chiefs intended to countenance such conduct on the part of their young men, but that they desired to keep good faith with the Indians who came to the Council, and therefore they had sent me for the horses, presuming that they would be delivered up without hesitation.

I then reminded the Chiefs that I had been a long time in their country; that we had always been good friends; that they had never stolen the horses left in my charge, nor those of my Indian friends who came to visit me, and I did not think they would be less friendly now. I believed the Chiefs would set this matter right; and I now asked them to take the stolen horses now in their camp, and deliver them to me to be sent to the Fort. I did not wish them to purchase the horses from those who had them, but to seize them, and say to the

<sup>7</sup>*Lame Bull*, or *Lone Chief*, was leader of the *Hard Topknots* band and signed the 1855 treaty as head chief of the *Peigan* tribe. He was killed in a buffalo stampede two years later.

<sup>8</sup>*James Bird, Jr.*, was a mixed blood son of a *Hudson's Bay Co.* factor and began working for the Company in the *Edmonton* district in 1810. He became an *Assistant Trader* in 1814 but left the firm during the 1820's to become a free trader. In 1831 he was engaged by the *American Fur Co.* to draw the *Peigans* south to trade on the *Missouri* but the *H.B.Co.* succeeded in winning him back as a *Clerk* late in 1833. During the next few years, although employed by the *British*, rumors were current that he was also receiving money from the *Americans*.

He left the company again in 1841, the same year he had a dispute with *Rev. R. T. Rundle*, *Methodist* missionary, and refused to interpret for him. Four years later, *Father Jean De Smet* engaged him at *Fort Edmonton* but *Bird* deserted him on the trail. *Paul Kane*, the artist, found *Bird* in charge of *Rocky Mountain House* in 1848 and, unlike the missionaries, considered him to be a hospitable and trustworthy man. After serving as interpreter for *James Doty*, *Bird* went to *Fort Benton* to interpret at the 1855 treaty. Six years later, and an old man by western standards, he was living in retirement in *Red River* settlement. By 1877, however, he was back in *Blackfoot* country herding horses with his brother. Because of his reputation, he was brought to *Blackfoot Crossing* in that year to interpret at *Treaty No. Seven*.

In the spring of 1885, *Bird* was old and blind and living with some *Crees* and *Metis* near *Buffalo Lake, Alberta*. When *Riel Rebellion* broke out, he moved to the *Blackfoot Reserve* for two or three years and in 1889 went to the *Peigan Reserve*. By the following year he was on the *Blackfeet Reservation* in *Montana* where he died in 1892 at the age of 107 years.





James Bird, Jr., known as Jimmy Jock Bird, was the interpreter for James Doty on his 1855 trip. For a biography of this controversial figure, see Footnote No. 8.

young men, "You may steal, but you shall not keep what you steal, in this camp."

The Chiefs replied that the matter would be attended to, and the Council adjourned until tomorrow, when I propose talking to them concerning the Great Council.

In the evening the Lame Bull informed me that three of the horses had been given up, and were in the hands of the Little Dog. The fourth horse had been taken by the man who stole it, to the North, and he thought could not be recovered, therefore in place of it he gave the Flat Heads a good horse of his own, which would be brought to me in the morning.

I accepted invitations to the Lodges of several Chiefs, among whom was the "Star Robe", a great Gros Ventre Chief, who had abandoned his people to live with the Piegans.

Thursday, Sept. 6th. The Indian camp numbering some 280 Lodges are scat-

tered along the River for a distance of 12 miles. They consist of about 200 lodges of South Piegans and 80 lodges of North Piegans & Blackfeet. The Lame Bull's camp of 62 lodges was about the centre, and here I invited the principal chiefs to meet me. At 10 A.M. they had assembled, and I stated to them fully the object of my visit. The Chiefs names are as follows, and they rank as they are placed, viz, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.

The Lame Bull	} South Piegans excepting the Mountain Chief, a North Piegan.
Mountain Chief	
Middle Sitter	
The Iron Shirt	
Kitch-e-pone-istah <sup>10</sup>	
Heavy Shield	
The White Bull	
The Fox	} Blood Indian.
The Star Robe	} Gros Ventres now joined with the Piegans.
The Iron Flag	

And there were present twenty-two other Chiefs and head men.

It is presumed to be unnecessary to state in detail my remarks to the Indians. The Council, the benefits accruing to them in case they made a Treaty and faithfully observed its stipulations, and the necessity that all the Blackfeet who hunt or trade on American soil should be present at the Council, were fully explained.

The question was put to them—after stating the proposition of bringing the Crow Indians into the Council—whether they would guarantee them safety in person and property. They were made to understand that the persons and property of all the Western Indians who visited the Council, were under the protection of the Commissioners, who looked to the chiefs of the Blackfoot Nation to prevent their young men from injuring

<sup>9</sup>Star Robe was considered to be the wealthiest Indian among the Gros Ventres. He signed treaties with the American government in 1855, 1865 and 1868.

<sup>10</sup>Spotted Calf. This may have been the chief who signed Treaty No. Seven in 1877 under the name of Running Rabbit. He was of mixed Peigan and Blood background and, after living with the Bloods until 1882 he moved permanently to Montana.



those Indians in any manner, and, in case they should, to make full compensation therefor.

They were directed to recognize Mr. Bird as United States Interpreter and to place confidence in what he should say to them on the part of the Commissioners.

They were requested to make arrangements to collect at "The Writings", on Milk River, in 12 days from this time, and appoint the place they would move to, within five days of the Fort, where a messenger could meet them with news of the time and place of holding the Council. They were recommended to continue hunting in the meantime, and supply themselves amply with meat.

In reply, the Chiefs unanimously expressed great satisfaction at what they had heard. They were glad to hear these things from an old friend because now they could believe them. Were willing to meet the Crows and try and make Peace with them, would pledge themselves for their safety, and that they should go home on as good horses as they came on. The same with regard to the Western Indians.

They would collect at the "Writings", as I proposed, and move slowly to Maria's River, whence they could easily reach the Fort in five days. They were glad to have Mr. Bird as an Interpreter, because he spoke their language well and they had confidence in him. They already had a good supply of meat, but would make more so as to give some to the "Soldier Chiefs", the Forts and other Indians who were poor. The Chiefs then said they wished to inquire concerning some bad stories that had been told them and which had given them much trouble. The following appears to be the substance of the most important one.

When the Piegans, Bloods, Blackfeet and Gros Ventres were encamped together near the Cypress Mountains<sup>11</sup>, some time in July last, intending so to remain until the period of holding the Blackfoot Council and attend it in a body, some Blood Indian warriors came from Forts Benton and Campbell to the camp and stated that a white man at one of the Forts had told them that three

boats were coming up the River loaded with goods. Two boat loads were for the purchase of all the lands of the Blackfoot Nation. Their lands and hunting grounds south of the Missouri River would be given to the Flat Heads, Pends Oreilles and Nez Perces for a home, and the remaining boatload of goods as presents. All the rest of the Blackfoot country the whites wished for themselves and would require the Blackfeet to move north beyond the Saskatchewan, not permitting them to come into this country to hunt or trade.

This story was much debated upon by the Chiefs of the combined camps and ended in the breaking up of the camp, the dispersing in various directions of the Bloods, Piegans and Blackfeet and a determination on the part of many of them not to go to a council where that would be required of them which they would never assent to. The Chiefs anxiously inquired if this were true.

I assured them that there was no truth in it whatever, and reminded them that I had often told them not to believe any stories they heard from the Forts concerning Government business. The Commissioners did not employ the people at the Forts to tell the Indians what kind of a Treaty they wished to make; they sent messengers to speak directly to the Indians. Now, all the Indians were requested to come to the Council and hear from the Commissioners themselves what the President wished the Indians to agree to, and what he was willing to do for them, provided they listened to his advice.

The Indians expressed much pleasure at hearing this explanation and said their path was now straight to go to the Council and take the advice of the "Great Soldier Chief"—meaning the President, and the Council then adjourned.

Having concluding my business here, & learning that there was a large camp of Indians on Bow River—supposed to consist of all the Bloods and 120 Lodges

<sup>11</sup>Cypress Hills, in south-western Saskatchewan and south-eastern Alberta.





Blackfoot Indians hunting buffalo near the Sweetgrass Hills were sketched by John Mix Stanley in 1853. Stanley was a member of the same expedition which brought James Doty to Blackfoot country. The Sweetgrass Hills are on the Alberta-Montana border east of Coultis.

of North Piegans and Blackfeet, I determined to proceed there and accordingly started from Lame Bull's Camp at 11 AM accompanied by Interpreter Bird, Mr. Jackson, my Indian guide and a Piegan Chief named *Kitch-ee-pone-istah*, [Spotted Calf] who had lately been at the North Camps, and who volunteered his services to guide me there. The Little Dog had declined going, having had difficulty with a Blood Indian Chief, whom he expected to meet there, and not wishing to renew the quarrel among his own people. We took with us no pack animal, each carrying a blanket and some meat on his saddle.

Crossed the River and travelled 11 miles up a small creek destitute of wood.<sup>12</sup> Leaving the creek and taking a course N10°W, true, Variation 19° East, in 19 miles reached a small marshy lake and encamped, having travelled seven hours and made by my estimate 30 miles.

Friday, Sept. 7th. Morning rainy and cold. We started early and in 20 miles

struck Bow River at the point where we supposed the Lodges to be, but found that they had removed some days since. Took breakfast at an old encampment on the plain, after which we pushed on up the river and in 15 miles, reached a point of Cottonwood where had been another encampment.

Following the Lodge Trail in 15 miles more, reached the Lodges. The High Bull, a Blackfoot Chief, came out to meet us and invited us to his Lodge, where we passed the night. I at once dispatched *Kitch-ee-pone-istah* across the river—the larger portion of the camp being on that side<sup>13</sup>—to demand of the Chiefs the stolen Flat Head horse, supposed to be in their camp, and to inform them that I would cross the river and hold a Council with them in the morning.

There are on this side of the River, 30 Lodges of the Blackfeet proper, and

<sup>12</sup>Little Bow River.

<sup>13</sup>This was probably the site known as North Camp Flats, a favorite camping place of the Blackfoot. It is located on the Blackfoot Reserve, about 10 miles south-west of Gleichen.



on the opposite side 90 Lodges Blood Indians, 70 North Piegiens and 20 Blackfeet and the whole Camp had appointed tomorrow as the day for breaking up Camp and moving North in search of Buffalo, as there are none here and the Indians are "starving".

The main Camp of Blood Indians—some 200 Lodges—have not been heard from since they parted from this camp at the Cypress Mountain, but are supposed to be moving towards the Three Buttes to join the Lame Bull.

In the evening I had a Council with the Indians on this side at which several chiefs from the opposite side were present. The same remarks, in substance, were made to them as to the Piegiens, and in reply they expressed much pleasure at what they heard and promised to come to the Council if the Camps opposite would do so. Several invitations were given me and among others I visited the Chief Talker's Lodge, a principal Blackfoot Chief.

This Indian had a small keg of whiskey—as he styled it—which he obtained from a party of Indians who had been to the British Post, Edmonton House, to trade, and had this day returned with a supply of rum and many Indians in the camp opposite were drinking to excess. He gave me a few drops of this "whiskey" to taste, and to me it seemed like the rinsings of a barrel in which might have been rum at some very ancient date.

Returning to High Bull's Lodge, we found that he had deserted it to cross the river and get drunk.

*Saturday, Sept. 8th.* Borrowed a strong horse and with Mr. Bird crossed Bow river. The ford is 300 yards wide, the water very swift and so deep as to run over our saddles for some distance. As we approached the Lodges, several Chiefs met us and we accompanied the "Eagle Flag" to the lodge of the "Big Painted Lodge". These two are the leading chiefs of this camp of Blood Indians.<sup>14</sup> Some thirty of the head men were already assembled and I at once laid before them the wishes of the Commis-

sioners. They discussed matters at great length, some adhering to their determination to go North, and others wishing to attend the Council. I urged upon them earnestly the propriety and necessity of going to the Council, etc., etc. and they finally agreed to move tomorrow towards Fort Benton and collect at "The Writings" by the 25th September.

Next visited the "Spotted Eagle", a Blackfoot Chief. He has with him ten lodges and will come to the Council. The Morning Star, with ten lodges will not come. The Bull's Head, with 70 lodges, North Piegiens, goes North.<sup>15</sup> He said he was very sorry he could not do as the "Soldier Chiefs" wished. He would like to go to the Council, but there was an old quarrel between himself and the Iron Shirt, a South Piegan, and if they met there would be murder committed. He did not wish to be engaged in fighting at the Council, because, if once commenced, it might not stop with those who began it and therefore he would not go. He was friendly to the Americans and would keep Peace if the Nation made one. The Flathead horse I had come for had been stolen by one of his young men and brought to his camp. He, the Chief, had taken the horse from the thief and now gave him to me to take to his owner. In the winter he should go to the American Fort to trade, and winter near there.

I next called upon "The Man Who Sits by the Eagle's Tail",<sup>16</sup> chief of a band of 18 Lodges of Blood Indians, called the "Robe Shirts". He said that he was a good friend to the whites and would like to go to the Council, but himself and people were very poor—they had only dogs to move with and could not go so far.

<sup>14</sup>*Blood informants say these men were Blackfoot chiefs.*

<sup>15</sup>*The prominent chief met and gave his name to Col. James Macleod when the N.W.M.P. settled at Fort Macleod in 1874. He died during the winter of 1874-75.*

<sup>16</sup>*This man also had the name of White Wolf but was better known as Rainy Chief. He was born in about 1809 and was friendly to the missionaries at a time when most chiefs were hostile. He signed Treaty No. Seven in 1877 as a head chief and died in the following year.*





James Doty was the first white man to record seeing the pictographs at Writing-on-Stone. This area is now preserved as a provincial park.

Thus of this combined camp, there are 100 Lodges which go North and 110 to the Council.

The Indians who came in yesterday from the North report that there were 200 lodges of Indians on Elk River<sup>17</sup>, viz; 30 of Circees<sup>18</sup> and 170 North Blackfeet, and that today they were to move north for Buffalo, as they were starving. It appearing to me clearly that these are British Indians, who neither hunt or trade on American soil, I did not, in view of my instructions, deem it my duty to endeavor to bring them to the Council, and therefore did not proceed to Elk River.

Having concluded my business here, I determined to return to Lame Bull's camp and start from there in search of the Blood Indians.

We started at 6 P.M. and travelling ten miles encamped at a small Lake. There was a heavy storm of rain and hail all night.

Sunday, Sept. 9th. Continued raining and very cold. Rode hard all day and in hopes that we might reach Belly River, but our Guide became bewildered and lost, and at 8 P.M. we lay down in the

Plain without wood or water. Travelled today 12 hours and made 55 miles.

Monday, Sept. 10th. Rained all night and continues heavily this morning. We started at 4 A.M., rode fast and in 18 miles reached Belly River. Crossed and passing up, 12 miles, reached the Lame Bull's Camp, in whose hospitable lodge we were glad to take shelter from the storm.

The Lame Bull informed me that on parting with the Blood Indian camp at Cypress Mountain, he arranged with their chiefs<sup>19</sup> to meet him at the "Writings", with their people and join com-

<sup>17</sup>Red Deer River.

<sup>18</sup>Sarcee Indians.

<sup>19</sup>Another draft of this report identifies the chiefs as "Mr. Culbertson's Brother-in-Law and Bulls Back Fat". The first man was Seen From Afar (Peenaquim) whose sister was married to Alexander Culbertson, chief trader for the American Fur Co. at Fort Benton. Seen From Afar was leader of the Fish Eaters band and was famous as a wealthy and influential chief. He signed the 1855 treaty and died in the smallpox epidemic of 1869-70. Bulls Back Fat was leader of the Buffalo Followers band and a son of a chief of the same name who had been painted by George Catlin in 1833. He was dead by 1877 but his grandson or grandnephew had inherited the name and signed Treaty No. Seven.



pany to the Council Grounds. Since then he had not heard from them, but was sure they were coming to meet him. Two days ago he had dispatched messengers to find the Blood Camp and expected them to return in two days from this.

On learning this, and after a due consideration of the facts that these Indians were now on their way to the Council, and therefore it was not imperatively necessary for me to see them; that to do so would consume eight or ten days during which my presence would be required at the Commissioner's Office, I determined to proceed tomorrow to Fort Benton, leaving Mr. Jackson and Mr. Bird to visit the Blood Indians and make the necessary arrangements to secure their attendance at the Council. Ample verbal instructions were given to Mr. Bird, who thoroughly understands the views of the Commissioners in relation to the assembling the Indians for the Council, and also to Mr. Jackson, to whom, in addition, full written instructions were given.

*Tuesday, Sept. 11th.* The Little Dog starts for the Fort this morning and I have given him charge of the Flat Head horses. I shall join him, accompanied by my guide from the Fort. The Lame Bull wished me to say that the Indians had no tobacco, and if the Commissioners would send them a little, it would be very acceptable.

Travelled among Buffalo all day. At 8 P.M., not being able to find water or wood, we lay down in the plain, having come to-day 40 miles.

*Wednesday, Sept. 12th.* My horse and one the Little Dog rode had strayed in search of water, and at 2 P.M. the Indians not having found them, I sent my guide to Lame Bull's camp to have the chief find them and bring them in, and pressing the Flat Head horses into service, pushed on to Milk River, which we reached in 20 miles, at a point 5 miles above the Writings, and here we encamped.

*Thursday, Sept. 13th.* Rained all last night, and continues this morning. Started late as the Flat Head horses are foot-sore, and need rest. The Little Dog went to search for my horse on the trail by which we came out, and in the afternoon I was not sorry to see him coming towards us with the runaways. The horses had taken the trail for the Fort, their home—for the time being—and, as the Little Dog said, had encamped at the same place we encamped coming out. I at once put them in service and at sundown we reached our former camp, at the Island called by the Indians *Kee-tokes-kit-see*, or the only place of woods.

*Friday, Sept. 14th.* Started early and in 45 miles struck Maria's River and encamped.

*Saturday, Sept. 15th.* Made an early start and rode fast, being determined to reach the Fort, and at sundown, having travelled 57 miles, we reached the Missouri at Fort Benton, after an absence of 15 days, and having travelled 583 miles. The Flathead horses were returned to their rightful owners at Governor Stevens' Camp.

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### New Rifles

"Two hundred of the new Lee-Metford carbines have arrived from England for the purpose of being served out to the Mounted Police. This is the weapon adopted by the British military authorities for the Imperial cavalry. It is fully double the range of the old Winchester carbines, which the police have at present, and can be sighted for two miles. The best weapons the Indians possess have only half that range. These weapons are being served out in advance of the distribution to the Imperial cavalry. They are light and of small bore. The cartridges contain smokeless powder."

—Calgary Weekly Herald, March 12, 1895.



# Eye Openers



The following are choice excerpts from regular issues of the Calgary Eye Opener, which published from 1902 to 1922, and Bob Edwards Summer Annuals of 1920-22. Also included are some of Edwards' earlier papers such as The Alberta Sun, Wetaskiwin Free Lance, Wetaskiwin Breeze, and the Innisfail Free Lance. The figurehead from his "Eye Opener" column is reproduced above.

JAN. 4, 1908:

"The Provincial parliament will assemble at Edmonton on the 15th. This solitary annual attraction should draw the usual number of visitors to the capital, unless the novelty has worn off. Calgary sits serenely and by virtue of its manifold attractions smiles indulgently at this lone event in the Uncle Tom—East Lynne beleaguered city up north. Dear Edmonton, will that hold you for a while? We are not sore. We do not need the parliament. There will be an occasional visitor straggling in without it. Have a drink on the House."

DEC. 15, 1917:

"Laurier, the long-haired demagogue, has never forgiven English-speaking Canada for defeating him at the polls in 1911. He is determined to become Premier again or bust. Let him bust."

DEC. 30, 1911:

"Advice for 1912: Do your share of work each day, pay your debts, save a little money, cut out the booze, talk only when you have something to say, don't get caught in a raid, look pleasant, and you will assist the world in growing better. (Loud and prolonged applause)."

APRIL 8, 1916:

"If the Conservatives in this Province are desirous of attaining power, which is in itself a very worthy ambition, they will have to make some radical changes in the personnel of the bunch they have been sending to represent them on the Opposition benches at Edmonton. A fresh bunch of candidates, live ones, will have to be hand picked for the next election."

JUNE 3, 1911:

"Every man should master the art of concealing his bloody ignorance."

MAY 5, 1906:

"It is very odd that the appointment of Lougheed to a more conspicuous position in the Senate should have been almost immediately followed by a resolution in the House to abolish the Senate altogether. Sir Wilfrid, however, did the next best thing. He said he would not object to the adoption of the United States principle of fixing the tenure of office enjoyed by senators. It is six years over in the States. If the office were elective, it would take a man very good at figures to count the number of votes Lougheed wouldn't get."

NOV. 2, 1912:

"When Premier Sifton and Malcolm Mackenzie dine with King George, we trust they will have tact enough to praise the Queen's cooking."

MARCH 9, 1907:

"Coming Events—At the Alexandra Hall, Thursday evening at 8 o'clock, Miss Leta Long, the reformed chorus girl of Black Brook fame, will give a vivid description for Men Only of her experiences in the Tower of Madison Square Garden. Prof. Bazel will sing Only a Pansy Blossom and Tosti's Good-bye. The Men Only are requested to bring their own refreshments. A good time is expected to be had."

SUMMER ANNUAL, 1920:

"The late Paddy Nolan used to tell this story about a man whom he had just got off on a charge of horse stealing.

"'Honor bright, now, Bill, you did steal that horse, didn't you?'

"'Now look here, Mr. Nolan,' was the reply, 'I always did think I stole that horse, but since I heard your speech to that 'ere jury, I'll be doggoned if I ain't got my doubts about it.'"



# NOTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

By the Editor

## Two New Booklets

The Historical Society, and its branch at Lethbridge, have issued new booklets which are available at a nominal cost.

The Lethbridge Branch has published *Battle at Belly River*, compiled by Alexander Johnston. This 28-page booklet contains contemporary accounts of the last big battle between the Crees and Blackfoot, which took place near the present city of Lethbridge in 1870. It is available for 50 cents from the Sir Alexander Galt Museum, Lethbridge, or from 95 Holmwood Ave. N.W., Calgary.

The other booklet, *Big Bear, Indian Patriot*, by William B. Fraser, is a reprint of the article carried in the Winter 1966 *Alberta Historical Review*. This 16-page booklet is available for 50 cents from the Historical Society of Alberta, 95 Holmwood Ave. N.W., Calgary.

A third booklet, *Indian Tales of the Canadian Prairies*, by James F. Sanderson, was published last year and is also available for 50 cents. It is a reprint of the article carried in the Autumn 1965 issue.

For details, see the inside back cover.

## Northrup Diary

Editor, The Review:

In the Minnie Northrup diary in the Spring 1966 issue, you have the following quotation: "At one of the stations an enormous wheel made of different grains was presented. Mr. Borden had it tied on to the back of the car with blue ribbons which was quite effective."

I'll bet the station was Lacombe and the daughter of the person making the wheel now lives in Victoria. She is Mrs. Pearl Prior and she could probably show you a seed picture that would convince you this was true.

R. E. LAWRENCE,  
Edmonton, Alta.

## Recollections of Edmonton

Editor, The Review;

I was very interested in the article by Mrs. Minnie Northrup in your Spring number. I landed in Strathcona in April 1898 and I knew three of the men mentioned in the article. Bishop Pinkham of Calgary preached in All Saints Church, Edmonton, in 1899 when Henry Allen Gray (later Bishop Gray) was Rector and Vernon Barford was organist. A little later I met Canon George H. Webb when he was Rector of Holy Trinity, Strathcona. He used to drive out each Sunday afternoon to Colchester and I often went with him in his buggy and team of buckskin ponies. When the log church was built, he and I varnished the pews.

I was Secretary-Treasurer of East Edmonton School District #98 for 33 years. It was situated 4 miles east of Strathcona. In 1900 I received a salary of \$40 a year. We had a male teacher, Edgar Richardson, who held a First Class certificate and taught Grades 1 to 8, and his salary was \$540 a year. As we were then in N.W. Territories, all school papers had to be sent to Regina.

When I first came to Edmonton, there was no bridge; we depended on the lower and upper ferries where the present low level and high level bridges are now. Jock Walter had a saw mill on the flats underneath where the high level bridge is now.

In those days an English £ was worth \$4.87; our school taxes were \$4.80 per  $\frac{1}{4}$  section; road taxes were paid by labour, \$1.00 for man and \$2.00 a day for man, team and scraper; the highest we received for milk was \$2.00 per 100 lbs. and at threshing time I bought a hind quarter of beef for 4½ cents a lb.; wheat was 50 cents a bushel, oats and potatoes 20 cents a bushel, eggs as low as 7 cents a dozen, and butter 20 cents a lb.

EDWARD GEE,  
Victoria, B.C.



# WESTERN BOOKSHELF

**The Emperor of Peace River,** by Eugenie Louise Myles. Applied Art Products, Edmonton. 310 pp., illus. \$5.00 cloth covered, \$3.75 paperbound.

Reviewed by James G. MacGregor, Edmonton

In this book about Sheridan Lawrence who for over fifty years farmed at Fort Vermilion, Mrs. Myles, one-time president of the Edmonton branch of the Historical Society, has made another contribution to Alberta's history. While it is not the gold mine of general information that her *Airborne from Edmonton* is, the book gives an utterly accurate portrayal of how pioneers actually lived.

As young people, in 1886, Sheridan Lawrence and Juey Scott accompanied their parents to Fort Vermilion on the lower Peace River. As it happened, both families left the railway at Calgary about the same time in the spring of 1886 and set out north on their 900 mile trip to the remote Anglican mission in northern Alberta. Three hundred miles by wagon and cart brought the Lawrence family through the hamlet of Edmonton with its 300 people and along the newly-cut Athabasca Trail to the few shacks that made up Athabasca Landing. From there, travelling by water where possible, they went on to the Anglican mission on Buffalo Bay, whence they set out over the muddy 100 mile portage trail to Peace River Crossing with its one lonely shack. Then, by making a raft, they swept down the Peace River some 200 miles to Fort Vermilion where Sheridan Lawrence's father was to be a farming instructor employed by the church.

In 1900, Sheridan and Juey were married. While fifteen children were born to them, Sheridan developed the farm to a major enterprise, milled his own wheat, and with the flour supplied much of the far north. He also set up several trading posts in the area between Fort Vermilion and Great Slave Lake. By all odds, the largest operator and the foremost leader along the lower Peace, he came to be called the "Em-

peror of the Peace" and after his death was honoured by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

Because Mrs. Myles knows the Peace River country so intimately and because she must have taken careful pains to extract every last item of the story from Mrs. Lawrence, who fortunately is still so keen of mind, this book is both accurate and interesting. Amongst many other items, the devastating flood which nearly swept away their entire establishment is recorded, and also the time when all the family, except Juey, came down with small-pox and she brought every one of them through alive.

The author writes well, using clear English, and fortunately resisted any temptation to spoil the book by grasping for heart-throbs. It may be, indeed, that the account is too factual or at least too detailed, and that the book might be improved by eliminating some of the minutiae which at times the reader wishes he could skip. Unfortunately, as the reader will soon discover, her draftsman has made an error in mapping the Lawrence's route to Fort Vermilion.

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**Wagon Roads West,** by W. Turrentine Jackson. Yale Western Americana Series. McGill University Press, Montreal. 422 pp., 21 maps, \$7.50.

Reviewed by Sheilagh S. Jameson

The sub-title of this book, "A Study of Federal Road Surveys and Construction in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1846-1869", conveys a much more authentic picture of the type of publication than that conjured up by the title proper with its popular and "colourful Old West" overtones. The author states in his preface that he is attempting to "describe and assess the role of the federal government in the location, survey, and improvement of routes for wagons in the trans-Mississippi West before the railroad era". He undertakes to show that it is not alone to the frontiersmen, the famous Pony Express riders, the vivid bull-whackers, the intrepid Western



businessmen who organized the mail, and freighting companies, that the credit should go for formulating the pattern of transportation across the American West in the pre-railroad period, but that "the national government's contribution to western transportation was continuous and dominant throughout the nineteenth century". To accomplish this purpose—and any reader will agree that he did indeed accomplish it—Mr. Jackson has dipped quite deeply into the vast resources of the National Archives, making use of quantities of government records, some of which constitute a hitherto untapped source. His bibliography totals an impressive 18 pages, the greater number of which are devoted to the section on primary sources.

*Wagon Roads West* is extensive in coverage, intensive in treatment, has been carefully documented and fully indexed and undoubtedly is a valuable source for serious students of Western American history.

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**The Story of the Years, Alberta W.C.T.U., 1913-1963.** 20 pp. Available from Mrs. G. H. Villett, 9823 - 91st Ave., Edmonton. 30 cents.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union first entered Alberta in 1886 when unions were formed at Morley and Calgary. In 1903 the first organizer began to work and a North-West Territories branch was established two years later.

In 1913 an Alberta branch was formed and a year by year account of its activities from that date is given in the booklet. For those who are not familiar with the W.C.T.U., this publication is a revelation. Besides its well known stand on liquor prohibition, the group has been active in many fields. Among these were women's voting rights, equal pay for equal work, delinquency, sex education, travellers' aid, mentally retarded, blind war veterans, and many other subjects. The most outstanding figure during these years was Mrs. Louise C. McKinney, who was president from 1913 until her death in 1931. She was also national vice-president and first vice-president of the world organization.

**Alberta's Schools of Agriculture, a Brief History,** by E. B. Swindlehurst. 119 pp. Department of Agriculture, Legislative Buildings, Edmonton. \$2.00.

This interesting book has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture on the 50th anniversary of the schools of agriculture. The author has been thorough in his research and has an engaging style which makes for easy reading. Adding to the interest are the reminiscences of some of the early participating in the school program.

While Olds and Vermilion are the only original schools still in operation, four others played their role in agricultural education. These were Raymond, 1920-21, Gleichen, 1920-23, Youngstown, 1920-23, and Claresholm, 1913-31.

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**Along the Old Melita Trail,** by Isabel M. Reekie. Modern Press, Saskatoon. 218 pp., illus. \$3.75.

Reviewed by Hugh A. Dempsey

This book, after a somewhat awkward and dull beginning, is a real jewel. Although the locale is the treeless plains of south-eastern Manitoba, the conditions described in the book could fit almost any western pioneer community.

The first three chapters deal with local history, biographies of the settlers, etc. This is pretty dull reading for a non-Melitaite, but once this hurdle has been overcome, the historical treasures begin to appear. In the succeeding pages, the author provides a graphic description of sod house construction, and the heroic attempts of the women to give the buildings a home-like atmosphere. This was sometimes impossible when muddy rainwater began seeping through the sod. Other accounts tell of the daily life of the housewife at the turn of the century, sewing, cooking, washing, and fulfilling all the other chores required of her. Later chapters deal with school life, winter storms, prairie fires, the country dances, church socials, and details of farm life.

The final third of the book is taken up with the colorful recollections of the



pioneers. Because they are told by the participants, the stories often take on an added flavor. The hardship, pleasures and adventures seem a little more real when told by the pioneers themselves. Like so many publications of this type, a little more light humor would have been welcome, but as a reflection of pioneer life, this must be considered an excellent book.

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**The Hutterite Way**, by Paul S. Gross. 219 pp., illus. Freeman Publishing Co. Ltd., Saskatoon, Sask., \$6.95.

This book, written by the minister of a Hutterite colony in Washington contains extensive information on the history and beliefs of the Hutterian Brethren.

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**Battle Bend Pioneers**, published by the Battle Bend Circle, Hardisty, Alta. 43 pp., illus. \$2.45.

This history deals with a rural area 15 miles south-west of Hardisty. It is a well written and interesting account, with many of the family histories being written by the families themselves.

The first settlers arrived in the area in 1906, most of them building sod or log homes on their homesteads. In the early years prairie fires were one of their main problems, but as more settlers moved in, the land was broken and the community became a thriving farming district.

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**Conquerville, a Growing Community**, 182 pp., illus. \$2.65, and **Winnifred, Our Trails, Trials and Memories**, 189 pp., illus. \$3.65, both compiled and available from Mrs. Ruth Collins, Maleb, Alberta.

These two local histories are multi-lithed and deal with adjoining areas east and south of Bow Island, between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. *Conquerville* was produced by the local Women's Institute while *Winnifred* was an outgrowth of the author's interest in the project.

Both histories are well written, containing the usual family histories, but

with emphasis being placed upon experiences and events, rather than genealogies. There is also considerable information on churches, schools, sports, and other activities. As local histories, these two volumes rank among the better ones produced in recent years.

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**A Catalogue of the Frederick W. & Carrie S. Beinecke Collection of Western Americana**, compiled by J. M. Goddard and Charles Kritzler. McGill University Press, Montreal, 114 pp. \$10.00.

Anyone who thinks that all the important historical documents have been in the hands of museums and archives for many years will be surprised by this volume. The Beineckes began collecting only about ten years ago, but have amassed a significant array of historical material. A total of 285 groups of documents are listed, including such impressive items as the field notes of Capt. W. Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

This material, which is now in the Yale University Library, centres upon California and the American south-west, but there are several items of interest from the Pacific north-west and British Columbia. We question the wisdom of publishing a \$10.00 book which will, because of its contents, be largely confined to research libraries and archives. On the other hand, it is probably intended to be as much a tribute to the Beineckes as it is a reference book.

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**Gladys and Dinton Through the Years**. 325 pp., illus. Available from Miss Florence Cannon, High River. \$8.50 hard cover, \$6.50 soft cover.

This book is a local history of the area south-east from the confluence of the Bow and Highwood Rivers. It was prepared by the Gladys and Dinton Women's Institutes and has information about pioneer families, social groups, agriculture and the general history of the region.

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**Rudyard Kipling's (Medicine) Hat Trick**, 8 pp., published and distributed free by Medicine Hat News, Medicine Hat.



In 1910 when attempts were made to change the name of Medicine Hat, Rudyard Kipling came to the defence of the colorful old name. This interesting little pamphlet reproduces Kipling's letter and the circumstances surrounding its writing.

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**Wood Mountain, Cannington Manor, and Territorial Government Buildings** are three booklets recently published by the Saskatchewan Diamond Jubilee and Canada Centennial Corporation, 515 McCallum Hill Bldg., Regina, Sask. During that province's diamond jubilee celebrations, historical parks were opened at all three sites, so the booklets will be of particular interest to persons visiting the areas.

*Wood Mountain*, by Morley Harrison, tells of the establishment of a North-West Mounted Police post in 1876 to watch over Sitting Bull's refugee Sioux. *Cannington Manor*, by Mrs. A. E. M. Hewlett, deals with a unique English colony which flourished in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. *Territorial Government Buildings*, by A. R. Turner, deals with the first territorial government buildings at Regina. All three are excellent and the projects are a tribute to Saskatchewan's work during the jubilee year.

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**Twenty Years on the Pacific Slope**, edited by W. Turrentine Jackson. McGill University Press, Montreal. 224 pp. \$6.00.

This book contains the letters of Henry Eno, prospector and newspaperman in California, from 1848 to 1871. As such, it is another in the valuable Yale Western Americana Series, which is being distributed in Canada by McGill University Press. In this age of high publication costs there are too few source books of this type being printed. Besides being a colorful and entertaining book on the gold rush, it is a good example that original documents, if properly edited and accompanied by the necessary introductions and footnotes, can have a place in the competitive book market.

This volume pays considerable—perhaps too much—attention to such details. The introduction occupies almost half the book and by the time the index and bibliography are accounted for, the Eno letters occupy only 108 pages of the 224-page volume.

In this case, however, the balance may be justified. The introduction provides a factual and well documented account of Henry Eno, so that the reader feels he almost knows him when he starts to read the letters. But, as in any successful work of this kind, it is the letters themselves that offer the true wealth. As he travelled through the mining camps of California and Nevada, Eno described the era in detail. The restless miners who became vanguards of civilization from California to the Klondike become alive through the skillful talent of this pioneer newspaperman.

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**Canada, an Outline History**, by J. A. Lower. Ryerson Press, Toronto, 248 pp., maps, \$2.75.

Probably prepared as a university reference, this paperback is a good example of scholarly material being made available at a modest price. The book covers the political, social and general history of Canada over a 400-year period. To do this successfully, the author has avoided any detailed treatment, but at the same time he has provided a bibliography at the end of each chapter which, in effect, becomes a selected reading list.

An excellent feature of the book is the liberal use of maps. Those tracing the events of the first and second Riel rebellions support the old adage that one picture is worth a thousand words.

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**Pursuit in the Wilderness**, by Charles Rivett-Carnac. Little, Brown & Co., Toronto. 341 pp.

An excellent autobiography by the former R.C.M.P. commissioner. This book takes the reader through the barracks rooms, the frozen Arctic and the administrative offices in Ottawa. It is a well-written and interesting account.



# PUBLICATIONS

## **Indian Tales of the Canadian Prairies,**

by James F. Sanderson, 1965, 16 pp. .... 50 cents

## **Big Bear, Indian Patriot,**

by William B. Fraser, 1966, 15 pp. .... 50 cents

## **Battle at Belly River,**

compiled by Alexander Johnston, 28 pp. .... 50 cents

## **North-West Historical Society booklets:**

### **1. The Alberta Field Force of 1885,**

by Col. F. C. Jamieson, 1931, 53 pp. .... \$1.00

### **2. The Dominion Telegraph,**

by J. S. Macdonald, 1930, 64 pp. .... \$1.00

### **3. The Story of the Press,**

edited by Campbell Innes, 1928, 106 pp. .... \$1.00

### **4. Canon E. K. Matheson, D.D.,**

a history of the Anglican Church in N.W.  
Saskatchewan, 1927, 86 pp. .... \$1.00

### **5. Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan,**

by Robert Jefferson, 1929, 160 pp. .... \$1.50

**Set of 5 above** ..... \$4.50

**Alberta Historical Review**, back numbers ..... each, 50 cents

Available: 1957, Summer and Autumn only; 1958 to  
1960, four issues a year; 1961, Spring, Summer and  
Autumn; 1962, four issues; 1963, Spring, Summer and  
Autumn; 1964 to date, four issues a year.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

95 Holmwood Ave. N.W.,

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**AIMS OF  
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- To promote interest in Alberta's history.
- To publish documents relating to the history of the West.
- To encourage the writing of reminiscences and local histories.
- To assist in planning and constructing museums, historical markers and highway signs.
- To help preserve historic sites and landmarks.